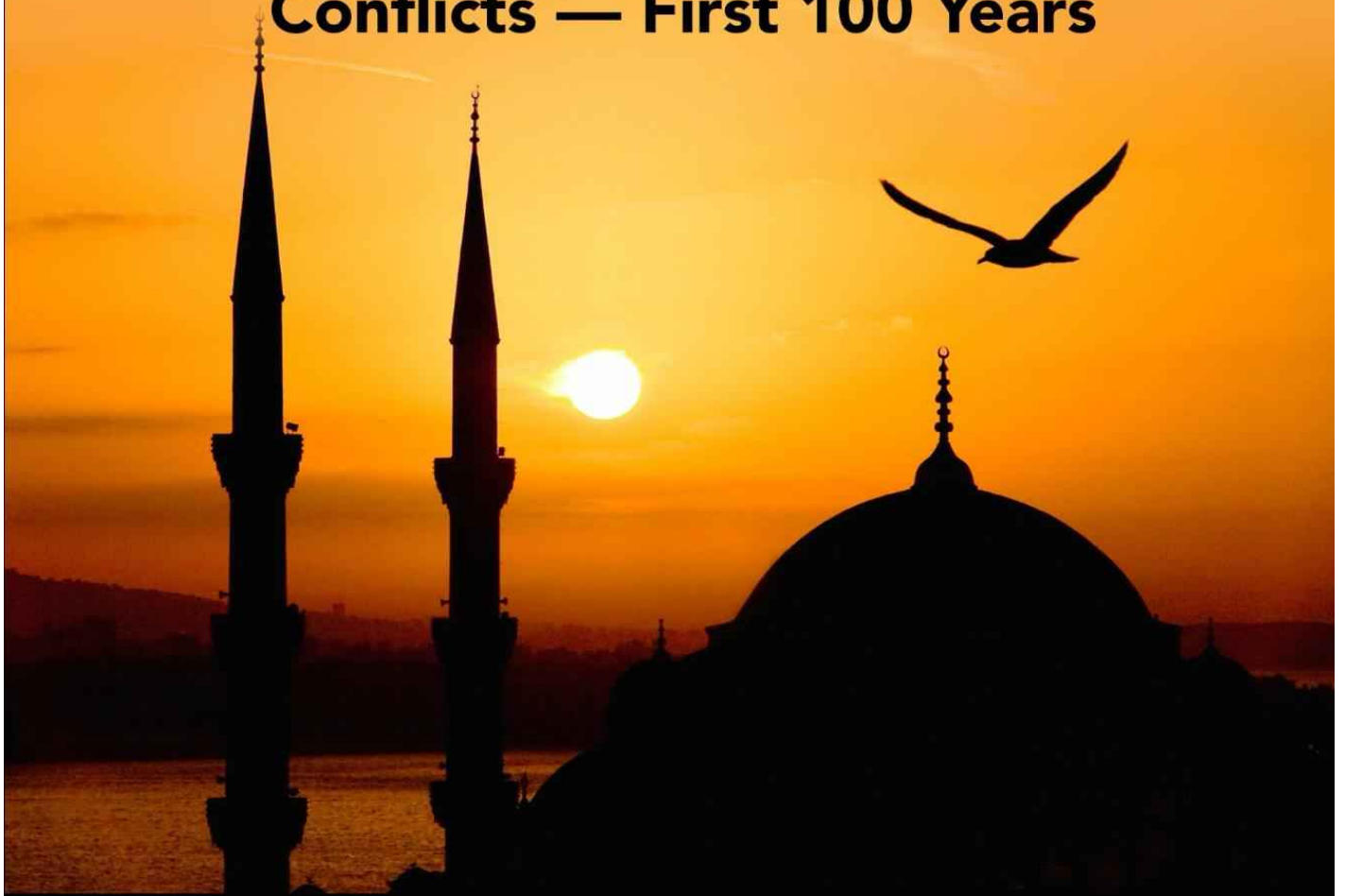


The Story of ISLAM, MUSLIMS, and the CALIPHATE

**History of Faith, Conquests, and
Conflicts — First 100 Years**



- * Shia / Sunni Split History
- * History of the Muslim Caliphate
 - * Early Islamic Conquests
- * Early Islamic Conflicts in Syria and Iraq

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1 Introduction

This book provides a summary of the events related to the history of Islam during the first one hundred years. The summary of events include the time of Pre-Islam Arabia, the start of Islam through the first revelation on Prophet Muhammad, the spread of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula and then leading to expansion of the Muslim state to include the areas of Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Caucasus, Pakistan, Turkey, and others. The book then provides the full background of the events that led to the Sunni Shiite (Shia) split and the key differences between the two sects.

The book is divided into nine chapters. Chapter 2 sets the scene of “Pre-Islam Arabia” and starts during the time when Prophet Ibraheem (Abraham) took his family to an uninhabited land, now called Makkah in present-day Saudi-Arabia. A quick summary of events will show how the deserted land then developed into a full-fledged city with getting numerous pilgrims daily. It then describes the first major attack on Kaabah right before Prophet Muhammad’s birth leading the reader to the events at the time of the Prophet’s birth.

Chapter 3 is a summary of Prophet Muhammad’s early years that led to him receiving the first Divine revelation of the Quran from Angel Gabriel. This Divine revelation then would continue for the next twenty three years bringing God’s message to mankind. Chapter 4 then summarizes the basic

message of Islam and the Quran, its beliefs, and how Islam's message is a continuation of God's message that was earlier revealed in Torah and Bible.

Chapter five then provides a glimpse of how the Prophet spread that message within the Arabian Peninsula and beyond that region to the Roman and Persian Empires. The chapter also takes the reader through the struggle and resistance that early Muslims faced from the locals who were determined to kill the Prophet, the new Muslims, and wipe out the religion of Islam. A summary of major conflicts at the time of the Prophet provides that picture. The chapter then continues to show how Islam slowly took hold within the Arabian Peninsula slowly absorbing all of it under its wings. The chapter then concludes with the events describing the death of the Prophet.

Chapter six to nine covers the time period after the death of the Prophet. This is the time of the first Islamic Caliphate that was ruled by the 'Rashidun' (Rightly-Guided) Caliphs. The readers get a glimpse of how Islam expanded from the region of Hejaz in present-day Saudi-Arabia to the lands that were earlier occupied by the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) and Sassanid (Persian) Empires. These four chapters provide the reign of the first four Muslim caliphs of Abu-Bakr, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, Uthman Ibn Affan, and Ali Ibn Abu-Talib. Each of the chapters highlights the characteristics of the reign of each caliph. Chapter six, for example covers Abu-Bakr's struggle in the apostasy wars. Chapter seven shows how Caliph Umar expanded the new Muslim territories from the Arabian Peninsula to include the areas of Syria, Iraq, Jerusalem, and approaching the borders of Caucuses.

Chapter eight and nine cover details of the many conflicts including events that ultimately led to the Sunni Shiite split. The chapters also include the struggle of the Muslims with the extremist Muslims that had surfaced throughout the Muslim territories. Chapter ten then covers the second era of the Banu Umayyah Caliphate and the events that further cemented the Shiite Sunni splits amongst the Muslims.

Most of the events of the book are based on Sunni sources and history differs greatly in the Shiite sources. Most of the events are described in light

of what is described in the Quran, Hadith (Prophet's narrations), and based on the works of Sunni scholars like Ibn Taymiyyah and Ibn Kathir.

2 Pre-Islam Arabia

We begin the story [\[1\]](#) when Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) took his wife Hajar and his infant son Ismail to the valley now known as Makkah. The Makkah valley is located in the western part of Saudi Arabia, 80 kilometers inland to the east of the port city, Jeddah. The city is situated between a mountain range referred to as the 'Sirat' or 'Sarawat Mountains'. Some of the popular mountain peaks in this range include Mount or 'Jabal' Ajjad, Mount Abu Qubais in the east, Mount Quayqan in the west, and Mount Hira in the northeast.

At that time, the various Makkah valleys and the nearby areas were completely uninhabited. Once in the valley, Prophet Ibrahim left Hajar and Ismail under a tree and headed back north. Hajar grew concerned and called on him repeatedly to return but he did not heed to her call. Finally, she asked him if Allah (God) had asked him to leave her and Ismail in the middle of the desert where there was no vegetation or water. When Prophet Ibrahim replied in the affirmative, she said that if Allah had ordered him to do so, then He would not abandon them.

Prophet Ibrahim walked a considerable distance so that his family was out of sight. He then faced toward the valley of Makkah and made the following prayer as was revealed in the Quran:

“O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring to dwell in an uncultivable valley by Your Sacred House (the Kaabah in Makkah) in order, O our Lord, that they may perform As-Salah (prayers). So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and (O Allah) provide them with fruits so that they may give thanks.” (Surah Ibrahim, 14:37)

2.1 Makkah Comes To Life

Hajar, concerned about the essential necessities of life, started rationing available food and water. However, after a while, that, too, was exhausted and she and her son Prophet Ismail started to become thirsty. Lack of water and no sign of life in the middle of the uninhabited Makkah valley made her panic and she rushed toward Mount Safa in the hope to find any signs of life. Not finding any such signs, she ran toward Mount Marwah (about three hundred meters away). There, too, she did not find anything and so she ran back toward Mount Safa. She repeated this trek between the two mountains seven times. Finally, when she got to Mount Marwah, she heard an unusual noise; when she looked in that direction, she saw an angel-like figure digging his heel into the ground with water gushing from that location. Desperate for water, she scooped up whatever she could and ran back to her child (Prophet) Ismail with that water.

Soon, the water (called Zamzam [2] ' water) started to flow from that location through the barren valley. Not far from there, a few men from the Jurhum tribe were passing by and they noticed a bird circling the area. As they approached, they found Hajar with her son and with water all around them. As they had found water in the middle of the barren valley and desert, they asked for her permission to settle in the area and later brought their families to live with them as well.

As the Jurhum tribe flourished in that area, Prophet Ismail started to grow up amongst the members of the Jurhum tribe and learned the Arabic language. Prophet Ibrahim came often to see his family from the area of Palestine, which is located 1,200 kilometers northwest from Makkah . On

one of his trips, he came and asked his son Prophet Ismail to help him build the house of Allah, the ‘Kaabah’, as Allah had ordered. As they built the Kaabah, Prophet Ibrahim made this prayer, as was revealed in the Quran:

“Our Lord! Accept (this service) from us. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knower.” (Surah Al-Baqrah, 2:127)

After the Kaabah was built, the valley of Makkah gradually came to life with the house of Allah in the middle and the Zamzam water gushing from underneath it.

The Kaabah is the cubicle building that is in the center of the Grand Mosque of Makkah, also called Masjid-ul-Haram (Sacred House). It measures approximately 13 meters by 12 meters by 11 meters and is the most sacred structure in Islam. It is also known as the House of God (Allah). As part of the pilgrimage to the mosque, Muslims (the followers of the religion of Islam) make seven rounds around the Kaabah while asking Allah for his mercy and help. Muslim Pilgrims also go between the Mounts Safa and Marwah seven times to commemorate what Hajar did when searching for water for her son Prophet Ismail (Ishmael).

As years passed, Prophet Ismail and his progeny continued to live in the Arabian Peninsula. The tribes that lived in (and around) Makkah valley over the coming centuries continued to follow the divine message that Allah (God) had revealed on Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Ismail. The essence of this message also forms the core of the principles of Islamic monotheism, also referred to as ‘Tawheed’ in Arabic. Tawheed refers to the Oneness of Allah (the only God) and not associating any partner in His Worship, Essence, and Attributes. The principle of ‘Tawheed’ is expressed through the Arabic words of “ *La Ilaha Illa-Allah* ”, which means, “There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah.”

The Quran says:

“Ibrahim (Abraham) was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim (worshipping none but Allah alone) and he was not of the polytheists.” (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:67)

Arabs followed this message of Islamic monotheism for centuries, until one tribal leader named Amr Ibn Luhai (Amr son of Luhai) visited Syria. During those times, Syria was a knowledge hub of various religions. There, Amr noticed a group of people worshipping idols. This practice appealed to him, and on his return to Makkah he brought with him an idol called Hubal and placed it inside the Kaabah and introduced the practice of worshipping this idol to his people. As years passed, idol worship, along with associated beliefs of paganism, spread from Makkah to nearby regions and consequently, more idols made their way into the Kaabah reaching up to 360 idols. The more prominent of these idols were ‘Al-Mannat’, ‘Al-Laat’ and ‘Al-Uzza’. People, therefore, deviated from the true Divine message by mixing such polytheistic practices in the religion, which is contrary to the principles of Tawheed’ and the religion of Islam. Although the Arabs (and others that followed the practices of idol worship) still worshipped the one God (Allah), they introduced idols as a means to bring them closer to the real God. Having an object that they could physically see and bow down to became important for them as a means to reach the God Almighty.

The Quran says the following:

“...And those who take Auliya (protectors and helpers) besides Him (say): We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah (God)...” (Surah Az-Zumar, 39:3)

Thus, gradually, the Kaabah transformed from the worship of Allah alone to the worship of these idols. Amr Ibn Luhai, who had brought these idols, also introduced additional practices associated with the worshipping of these idols. People, for example, would prostrate to the idols, ask them for favors, and would sacrifice animals to these gods made of wood and stone. Practices involving astrology and soothsaying also took a strong hold in the area of Makkah. Moreover, both men and women would go around the Kaabah in the nude.

When Islam’s message came to the Prophet, it abolished such practices. The following verses were revealed in this context in the Quran:

“O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid (places of worship), and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess.” (Surah Al-Aaraf, 7:31)

These practices of idol worship, polytheism, superstition, vulgarity in expression, etc. thus were quite common in the Arabian Peninsula when Prophet Muhammad was born.

2.2 Jews and Christians in Arabia

Before the birth of Prophet Muhammad, a number of Jewish and Christian tribes had also settled in the Arabian Peninsula, especially in the region of Hejaz. Hejaz is the region in western Saudi Arabia that extends from the southwest of Saudi Arabia to the north of the city of Tabuk – a distance of approximately 1800 kilometers and includes the cities of Jeddah, Makkah, and Madinah. The Jews had migrated to the northern region of Hejaz after the destruction of the temple in Palestine. Later, when Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE, they immigrated more toward the south in large numbers to the areas in present day Madinah (referred to as ‘Yathrib’ at the time), and Khaibar, which is an area north of Madinah. Many Jewish tribes settled in those areas, but most prominent of those were Nadeer, Quraizah, Khabeer, and others. Later, their generations were referred to as Banu An-Nadeer (sons of An-Nadeer and so on). A considerable number of Jews lived in Yemen as well (south of present-day Saudi Arabia).

A large number of Christians also had settled in the area of Najran (a city in southern Saudi Arabia). According to many historians, a person named Asad Abi Karb who used to live in Yemen, went to north of Hejaz to fight the Jews. However, once he arrived there, he converted to Judaism and on his return to Najran brought along a few Jewish Rabbis. Back home in Yemen and Najran, he tried to convert the Christians into Judaism but was not successful. After his death, his son Yusuf Dhu Nawas tried to do the same, but when they refused, he ordered the preparation of a very large fire

pit and threw the Christians in it. This incident was later revealed in the Quran in the Chapter of Burooj (Chapter 85). The initial verses of that chapter in the Quran say:

- *Cursed were the companions of the trench*
- *[Containing] the fire full of fuel,*
- *When they were sitting near it*
- *And they, to what they were doing against the believers, were witnesses.*
- *And they resented them not except because they believed in Allah, the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy*

The believers in this case were the Christians who were thrown in that pit by Dhu Nawas.

2.3 The Incident of the Elephant before the Prophet's Birth

One year before the birth of Prophet Muhammad, the King of Yemen appointed Abrahah Ibn As-Sabah (Abrahah son of As-Sabah) as the governor of that region. Earlier, Abraha was a general of the forces in the kingdom that included present-day Yemen and parts of Hejaz. As a Christian, he found it strange and unacceptable to see the local Arabs go for pilgrimage to the Kaabah in Makkah during the Hajj (pilgrimage) season. Therefore, to discourage the locals from traveling to Makkah, he built a majestic church in Sanaa (present-day capital of Yemen and located 800 kilometers south of Makkah). He made the church quite colorful and fitted it with quite expensive stones and marbles. However, the church failed to attract local Arabs and they continued to travel to Makkah for their annual pilgrimage.

Seeing this, and after a few incidents where some locals had desecrated the church that he had built, Abrahah decided to attack Makkah and to demolish

the holy site of the Kaabah. In preparation of this, he gathered a large army of elephants that consisted of the great white elephant of the King of Yemen along with an army of forty thousand men. As he marched towards Makkah, although a number of local tribes attempted to put up a resistance, Abrahah was able to crush them easily using his strong army [3] .

As Abrahah came nearer to Makkah, the elephants refused to move forward. All his soldiers' attempts to push them towards Makkah failed. The elephants would move only when faced in directions away from Makkah. As they were busy struggling to steer the elephants toward Makkah, a flock of birds carrying hot stones in their beaks and legs stormed the elephants and dropped those stones on the army. Those burning stones completely decimated Abrahah's army. Although Abrahah was able to flee, he died before he returned home.

This event occurred about two months before the birth of the Prophet around 570-571 CE of the Gregorian calendar, and spread a sensation throughout the region. The year in which the incident happened is also called "The Year of the Elephant" in Islamic History and is considered as the birth year [4] of Prophet Muhammad. This event further elevated the honor of the city of Makkah and of the house of Allah, the Kaabah, amongst Arabs. The Quran also mentions this event in Surah Feel (Chapter of the Elephant.)

3 The Last Prophet – His Early Life and the First Revelation

Prophet Muhammad was born in Makkah in the year 571 CE. At that time, the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires were the largest ruling empires in the world. The Byzantine Empire was an extension of the Roman Empire on the east with Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) as its capital. The empire's territories were to the north and northwest of the Arabian Peninsula and included parts of present-day Syria (including Damascus)

and Palestine (including Jerusalem), and it extended to the borders of Spain in the west. Egypt, too, was part of the Byzantine Empire except for a period of about ten years when it was under the control of the Sassanid Empire. This was because of the ongoing conflicts between the two empires where they kept wrestling for control of territories. In the north, the Byzantine Empire extended to the Black Sea, and in the south it stretched to the borders of the Mediterranean Sea. At the Prophet's birth, Justin II of the Justinian Dynasty was the emperor of the Byzantine Empire.

The Sassanid Empire, on the other hand, ruled the territories in the north, northeast, and east of the Arabian Peninsula. In the east it included areas under present-day Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and western parts of present-day Pakistan. In the northeast it included areas in the Caucuses, whereas in the southeast its borders extended to the Arabian Sea. In the west and northwest, its borders extended to Armenia and parts of present-day Turkey. At the Prophet's birth, Khosrow I, also referred to as Khusru or Kasra, was the emperor of the Sassanid Empire.

The Arabian Peninsula at the time of the birth of the Prophet was under the control of various tribes and larger clans. Makkah was mostly ruled by the clan of Quraish that comprised of two primary ruling families of Banu Hashim (children of Hashim) and Banu Umayyah (children of Umayyah). A few centuries ago, when in Makkah, Prophet Ismail had married the daughter of a Jurhum tribal leader from whom he then had twelve sons, whose descendants formed various tribes. One of them was the noble clan of Quraish. One of the notables in Quraish was Abd Manaf Ibn Qusai (Abd Manaf son of Qusai) who was the ruler of Makkah. He had a son named Hashim and his descendants came to be known as Banu Hashim. One of Abd Manaf's sons was Abd Shams, whose grandson's name was Umayyah. His descendants in Quraish came to be known as Banu Umayyah.

During his days, and a few generations before the birth of Prophet Muhammad, Hashim was known to take care of the pilgrims who would visit Makkah, and would offer them food and water. He was also a merchant who traveled between Makkah, Syria, and Palestine. He had four sons, one of whom was Abdul-Muttalib (Prophet Muhammad's grandfather). Hashim married Abdul-Muttalib's mother in Madinah where

Abdul-Muttalib was also born. After the death of Hashim, his brother Al-Muttalib (not to be confused with Abdul-Muttalib) took over the task of catering for the pilgrims of Makkah. During one of Al-Muttalib's trips to Madinah, he went to see his nephew Abdul-Muttalib and asked his mother if he could bring Abdul-Muttalib back to Makkah to help him take care of the pilgrims and the Kaabah. Initially, Abdul-Muttalib's mother did not agree, but after Al-Muttalib reminded her of the service that his father Hashim was known for in Makkah, she agreed to send Abdul-Muttalib with his uncle to Makkah.

Abdul-Muttalib became actively involved with his uncle in reviving the tradition of his father, Hashim. After the death of his uncle, Al-Muttalib, Abdul-Muttalib continued the tradition of taking care of the Kaabah and the pilgrims. Due to his service to the Kaabah and the fact that he was continuing with the tradition of his father, he was well respected within the various clans of Makkah and loved by the pilgrims who would come to visit Makkah.

Abdul-Muttalib (the Prophet's grandfather) went through two notable experiences in his lifetime. The first was when he had a dream in which he was asked to dig in the area where the water of Zamzam once flowed. This was at the same location where Prophet Ibrahim had left Hajar with her newborn child, Prophet Ismail. It should be noted that by this time, the Zamzam well had dried up. When Abdul-Muttalib dug at that location, he found a large treasure that the Jurham tribe had buried. Besides, the well of Zamzam once again started to flow with water. As this was a significant find, the Quraish clan wanted a claim of that too, but Abdul-Muttalib refused and retained his claim and ownership of that area.

Abdul-Muttalib had a son named Abdullah. He arranged for his son to marry Aminah, who hailed from a noble clan of Banu Zahra in Makkah. After their marriage, Abdul-Muttalib sent his son, Abdullah, to Syria for business while his wife Aminah was pregnant with Prophet Muhammad. On this trip, Abdullah died in Madinah at the very young age of twenty-five.

As the Prophet's great grandfather's name was Hashim, he is therefore known to come from the Banu Hashim (Sons of Hashim) clan.

3.1 Early Life of the Prophet

Prophet Muhammad was born in Makkah in the month of April, 571 CE, corresponding to 9th of Rabi-ul-Awwal of the Islamic calendar. According to some narrations, Aminah said that a very bright light emitted from her body when the Prophet was born. There are other narrations that describe that on the Prophet's birth, Kisra's (Persian King of the Sassanid empire) palace cracked and the fires that magicians used to light as part of their rituals (quite common for those days) died.

There are differing opinions regarding the exact date of the Prophet's birth. The Prophet did not get the divine revelation until he was forty years old, after which his name started to become increasingly popular throughout Arabia. Furthermore, the Islamic calendar was formally established during Caliph Umar's time many years after the Prophet's death. Calculating the correct date for the Prophet's birth afterwards, therefore, resulted in multiple opinions that range from 2nd of Rabi-ul-Awwal to 17th of Rabi-ul-Awwal. Although many believe it to be 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal of the Islamic Calendar, many scholars believe that it was 9th of Rabi-ul-Awwal that corresponded to April 20th, 571 CE. The only confirmation about the day of his birth is that he was born on a Monday, and that is because of the authentic hadith (narration of Prophet Muhammad), which mentions that he was born as well as got the revelation on a Monday and was tasked to spread the message of Islam [5].

According to the Arab customs of those days, the Prophet was sent into the care of a nurse and a teacher, Halimah bint Abi Dhuaib, who raised him in the suburbs of Makkah. She relates that before the Prophet came to live with her family, they lived a life of hardship. However, the day they took the Prophet under their care, their life changed for the better and her household was blessed with an abundance of life's provisions. Halimah and her family, therefore, were delighted to have Muhammad in their household. However, one unusual incident gave them an indication that the Prophet was not any ordinary child. One day, a number of children were

playing and they saw someone come and open the Prophet's chest, took out his heart and wash it with water. On witnessing this unusual scene, the children ran to their mother, Halimah, and informed her that someone had murdered Muhammad. Later, when they all went back to check on him, they found him to be living and fine except for his face, which had turned white. Many years later, after the Prophet had received the revelation from Allah (God), he confirmed this event and mentioned that it was Angel Gabriel (in another shape) who had come and washed the Prophet's heart in Zamzam water to remove Satan's stains from it.

This startling event shook Halimah's entire household and she decided to return Prophet Muhammad back to his mother in Makkah.

The Quran also mentions a similar divine event about Prophet Jesus. The Quran mentions the story that when Prophet Jesus' mother, Maryam, who did not have a husband returned to the city, everyone looked at her in astonishment. In response, she kept quiet and pointed to Prophet Jesus (the child). This was the moment when Prophet Jesus spoke in his cradle. The Quran mentions that event in Surah Maryam (Mary) as follows:

- *Then she (Maryam) brought him (the baby Jesus) to her people, carrying him. They said: "O Mary! Indeed you have brought a thing Fariya (an unheard mighty thing).*
- *"O sister of Harun! Your father was not a man who used to commit adultery, nor was your mother an unchaste woman."*
- *Then she pointed to him. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?"*
- *"He [Eesa (Jesus)] said: Verily! I am a slave of Allah, He has given me the Scripture and made me a Prophet;"*
- *"And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and has enjoined on me Salat (prayer), and Zakat, as long as I live."*
- *"And dutiful to my mother, and made me not arrogant, unblest.*
- *"And Salam (peace) be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!"*
- *Such is Eesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary). (It is) a statement of truth, about which they doubt (or dispute).*

(Surah Maryam, 19:27-34)

When the Prophet turned six years old, his mother passed away, after which Abdul-Muttalib (his grandfather) took over his guardianship. However, when the Prophet was around eight years old, Abdul-Muttalib, too, passed away. His upbringing then passed on to his uncle, Abu-Talib. Similar to Abdul-Muttalib, Abu-Talib raised the Prophet with great care and respect.

When the Prophet was twelve years of age, Abu-Talib went to Syria for trade and took Prophet Muhammad along with him. Once in Syria, a monk by the name of Georges (Buhaira) welcomed them with great honor and respect. The monk told Abu-Talib about Muhammad and that one day he would bear the message of mercy for humanity. When Abu-Talib asked him how he came to know about this, the monk mentioned that the moment they had entered the city he watched a number of stones and trees prostrate, and that, according to his scriptures, was a sign related to a prophet. Buhaira also checked the Prophet's back between his shoulder blades where he was able to see a mark (in the form of a physical seal) of prophethood.

As Prophet Muhammad became older, he enjoyed a respectable reputation amongst the people of Makkah as they considered him wise, truthful, and honest. Due to these qualities, the tribes used to turn to him to settle their disputes. The people of Quraish referred to him by the names of "Sadiq" (Truthful) and "Al-Ameen" (Trustworthy). Although the people of his time were indulged in idolatry and polytheistic practices, he felt disgust for such practices. He also kept away from various forms of entertainment that people used to indulge in. According to one hadith, he once wanted to participate in such forms of entertainment of music and drinking. However, when he arrived at one of the houses in Makkah for such entertainment, he was overcome by sleep and thus could not participate in them.

In his 20s, Prophet Muhammad started to work for a noble businesswoman from Makkah named Khadeejah bint Khuwaylid (Khadeejah, the daughter of Khuwaylid), who was also a widow. Khadeejah used to send men who worked for her to Syria to trade goods for her business and she then would share the profits with them. As part of her business dealings with the Prophet, Khadeejah became quite impressed with his calm demeanor, truthfulness, and honesty. Being a noble and respected woman, she had

earlier received many marriage proposals from the elite of Makkah but she had declined all of them. However, observing Prophet Muhammad's character, she proposed marriage to him through an intermediary. The Prophet accepted her proposal and she became Prophet Muhammad's first wife. During their years together, the Prophet expressed utmost respect and love for her. Although people commonly practiced polygamy during those times, the Prophet did not marry anyone while she was living. Khadeejah, too, supported him in his hard times and was the first woman to accept Islam after the revelation of the Quran's first verses on the Prophet. The Prophet had all his children from Khadeejah, except his son Ibrahim (who died in childhood). His children were Zainab, Ruqayyah, Fatimah, Umm Kulthum, Al-Qasim, and Abdullah. All his sons died during their childhood too.

3.2 The Revelation of the Quran

Prophet Muhammad regularly used to go to cave Hira, located at the outskirts of Makkah, for meditation. The Prophet was particularly disturbed about the lifestyle of his fellow Quraish, which as described earlier comprised of idolatry, losing oneself through intoxication, and immoral entertainment. He would go to the cave to contemplate the creation, the purpose of the creation, and life in general. During one of these trips to the cave, as later narrated by one of his wives (and mother of the believers [\[6\]](#)), Aisha, Angel Gabriel descended on the Prophet and said, "Recite." The Prophet replied by saying that he could not recite. The angel then squeezed him hard and let go of him and asked him to recite again. The Prophet replied with the same answer, so the angel repeated this until the Prophet became exhausted. The angel then repeated this for the third time and followed up by saying the following Quran verses, which were the first revealed verses of the Quran:

"Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists), has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated

blood). Read! and your Lord is the Most Generous.” (Surah Al-Alaq, 96:1-3)

This unusual experience left the Prophet distraught and so he hurried back home to his wife Khadeejah. When he explained the whole incident, she took this in a positive light and calmed him down by telling him that as he had an exceptional character, took care of the poor and the orphans, and possessed good qualities, God (Allah) was not going to disgrace him.

After a few days, Prophet Muhammad saw Angel Gabriel above in the heavens. The angel told him that he was the messenger of Allah. When he mentioned this to Khadeejah, she took the Prophet to her older cousin Warqa Ibn Nawful (Warqa son of Nawful), who had embraced Christianity and used to write the Bible in Hebrew. When he listened to these incidents, he confirmed through his knowledge of the scriptures that the same angel had brought the message to Prophet Moses and the Prophet's experience was not a hallucination.

This was the first revelation and message of the Quran from Allah on the Prophet through Angel Jibreel (Gabriel), and his wife Khadeejah became the first woman to believe in this message. Later, more revelations confirmed that Allah (God) of the Christians and Jews and others had chosen Muhammad to communicate the Divine message to the entire humanity. As an example, the Quran says:

“O Mankind, the Messenger has come to you with the truth from your Lord, so believe; it is better for you. But if you disbelieve - then indeed, to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth. And ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.” (Surah An-Nisa (The Women), 4:170)

“And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except comprehensively to mankind as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. But most of the people do not know.” (Surah Saba, 34:28)

As was expected, when Prophet Muhammad started to communicate the message of Islam to others, the clans of the Quraish and others did not take it lightly. The Prophet had started preaching a message that was not only an antithesis to their beliefs but also posed a challenge to their practices and way of life. The Quran's verses that describe Prophet Hud (identified as Eber in the Old Testament) and his experience with his people were reflective of Prophet Muhammad's situation. The Quran states:

- *(Hud) said: "O my people! There is no foolishness in me, but (I am) a Messenger from the Lord of the Alamin (mankind and all that exists)!"*
- *"I convey unto you the Messages of my Lord, and I am a trustworthy adviser (or well-wisher) for you."*
- *"Do you wonder that there has come to you a Reminder (and an advice) from your Lord through a man from amongst you that he may warn you? And remember that He made you successors after the people of Nuh (Noah), and increased you amply in stature. So remember the graces (bestowed upon you) from Allah, so that you may be successful."*
- *They said: "You have come to us that we should worship Allah Alone and forsake that which our fathers used to worship. So bring us that wherewith you have threatened us if you are of the truthful."*

(Surah Al-Aaraf (The Heights), 7:67-70)

Soon after the Prophet started conveying the message, the Quraish started to harass and persecute the Prophet and the few who had accepted the message of Islam. Some of his companions were even tortured and killed. People who first heeded to the Prophet's call of Islam during the first days were few and included Khadeejah (the wife of the Prophet), Zaid Ibn Harithah (the Prophet's freed slave), Ali Ibn Abu-Talib (Ali, the son of Abu-Talib, the Prophet's cousin), and Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq (the Prophet's best friend and companion). Through their efforts and especially the efforts of Abu Bakr, more people entered into Islam later. They included the following:

- Uthman Ibn Affan
- Abdur Rahman Ibn Awf,
- Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas,
- Talhah Ibn Ubaidullah,
- Bilal Ibn Rabah (the Abyssinian slave),
- Abu-Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrah,
- Saeed Ibn Zaid Al-Adawi,
- Zubair Ibn Awwam Al-Asadi,
- Fatimah bint Al-Khattab (Saeed Ibn Zaid's wife and the sister of Umar Ibn Al-Khattab)

It is worth noting that many, who actively resisted and fought the Prophet against the spread of the Divine message, later converted to Islam and became the prominent companions of the Prophet and actively supported the cause of Islam. These included Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed, Amr Ibn Al-Aas, and many others. Another name worth noting in this context is that of Abu-Talib, who was the Prophet's uncle and had raised him, but did not accept the message of Islam and died as a non-believer. However, he supported the Prophet in his efforts to spread the Divine message. His son, Ali ibn Abu-Talib, was the youngest among the youth to have accepted Islam.

4 The Message of Islam and the Quran

Prophet Muhammad's main task was to spread Allah's message that was revealed to him in the form of the Quran in its true form to all humanity. As the Quran states in Surah 21, Verse 107, he was sent with a message of mercy for all humanity. Allah makes it clear in the Quran repeatedly that the Quran is the continuation of His message that He had earlier revealed to many prophets and messengers including Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in the Torah (Old Testament) and Prophet Jesus (peace be upon him) in the Bible (New Testament). However, as their followers in earlier generations altered those messages during the course of time, Allah sent his final message (the Quran) on his last Prophet (Muhammad). The Quran says the following:

“O people of the scripture (Jews and Christians)! Now has come to you our messenger (Muhammad) making (things) clear unto you, after a break in (the series of) messengers, lest you say: “there came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner.” But now has come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner. And Allah is able to do all things.” (Surah Al-Maida, 5:19)

Over the course of the twenty three years that the Prophet received the revelation, he lived the message of the Quran in his daily life. During this period, his companions and all those around him not only heard the revelation from the Prophet firsthand but also observed the Prophet living and implementing that message in his daily life. Therefore, the Quran, as well as the Prophet's traditions and sayings (also referred to as hadith), became the basis of the message of Islam. Allah tells mankind in the Quran:

“And obey Allah and the messenger (Muhammad)...” (Surah Al-Maeda, 5:92)

Moreover, while the Quran established the Prophet's character as a role model for the entire humanity, he was strictly warned in the Quran not to alter that message as was done by the nations before him. The Quran mentions in Surah Al-Haqqah, verses 44 and 45:

And if he (Muhammad) had forged a false saying concerning Us (Allah),

We surely should have seized him by his right hand (or with power and might)

As the Divine message was revealed to the Prophet in the form of the Quran, there were some who wished the message to have been different and to their liking. The Prophet made it clear to everyone that he could not change the message, as he was just a messenger of the Divine message. The Quran states:

“And when Our (Allah’s) Clear Verses are recited unto them, those who hope not for their meeting with Us (Allah), say: Bring us a Quran other than this, or change it.” Say (O Muhammad): “It is not for me to change it on my own accord; I only follow that which is revealed unto me. Verily, I fear if I were to disobey my Lord, the torment of the Great Day (i.e. the Day of Resurrection).” (Surah Yunus, 10:15).

During his last sermon, the Prophet made it clear that no prophet or messenger would come after him. He emphasized that the success for humanity is to stick to the message of Quran and his Sunnah (his traditions and sayings).

4.1 The Message of Islam

As mentioned earlier, the Quranic message emphasizes the message of Tawheed (Islamic monotheism) as the core message of Islam. That principle in Arabic is expressed through the words of “*La Ilaha Illa-Allah*”, which means that “there is no deity worthy of worship except Allah.” In various places, the Quran clarifies the notion of one deity of the universe – Allah – as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The Quran ascertains that

message through various means including appealing to human intellect (e.g. Surah At-Tur: 52,35), natural human instincts (e.g. Surah Al-Anaam: 6,14), and by discussing other divine religions such as Judaism and Christianity (e.g. Surah An-Nisa: 4,171).

The Quran also calls upon those who worship idols and warns them repeatedly on taking gods who neither can benefit nor harm themselves. The Quran states:

“Yet they have taken besides Him (Allah) other gods that created nothing but are themselves created, and possess neither hurt nor benefit for themselves, and possess no power (of causing) death, nor (of giving) life, nor of raising the dead.” (Surah Al-Furqan: 25:3)

The crux of the Divine message as revealed in the Quran and as spread by Prophet Muhammad was that there is no deity worthy of worship other than Allah. He is Creator and Sustainer of all things. All humanity will be called into account for their deeds on the Day of Judgment when all will be resurrected. Those who pass the judgment will be entered into Jannah (Heaven) and the rest will be entered in Jahannum (Hell Fire). The Quran's verses emphasize that while Allah is often forgiving to those who ask for His forgiveness, He will not forgive the sin of Shirk, which is to associate other partners in His deity. In response to those who claimed that Allah (God) has sons, daughters, or other partners, Surah Ikhlas in the Quran states the following verses:

- ***Say (O Muhammad): "He is Allah, (the) One.***
- ***"Allah is Samad' (The Self-Sufficient Master, Whom all creatures need, He neither eats nor drinks).***
- ***"He begets not, nor was He begotten;***
- ***"And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him."***

There are six pillars of the Islamic faith and they are to believe in Allah, His angels, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, and that the Divine decree, both good and bad, comes from Allah [7] .

The 'Books' refer to all those books that were revealed to His messengers and include the Torah and the Bible. The belief is to believe in their revelations but as their contents were changed over time, the Quran's message supersedes those messages.

The Quran's verses make it clear that the same message of Islamic monotheism was spread by the earlier prophets and messengers, some of whom are Prophet Adam, Noah, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismaeel (Ishmael), Daud (David), Suleiman (Solomon), Yaqoob (Jacob), Yousuf (Joseph), Moosa (Moses), and Eesa (Jesus). All these prophets and messengers and others are mentioned in the Quran along with their quest to get this message to their nations and people.

Islam is, therefore, a continuation of the Abrahamic religions of Judaism and Christianity. However, as the revealed messages in those scriptures were changed, Allah (God) refreshed that message in the Quran. Islam is, therefore, a religion for all humanity, inviting all to the message of Islamic monotheism (Tawheed). The Quran says:

Say (O Muhammad): "O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah. Then, if they turn away, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims." (Surah Ale-Imran, 3:64)

4.2 The Sunnah of the Prophet and the Followers of Sunnah (Sunnis)

The Sunnah is what was communicated as hadith (traditions and sayings of the Prophet) through the Prophet's companions (people who lived in the

times of the Prophet and listened to the message firsthand) to others. Those who came after the companions took great care in relaying not just the Quranic verses but the sayings and traditions of the Prophet (hadith) as well. Together, they form the primary building blocks of Islam's message as is followed by Muslims who are the followers of the Sunnah, and thus the term 'Sunni Muslims' was coined.

Through his teachings, the Prophet was able to emphasize the message of the Quran (e.g. the importance of praying), elaborated on certain messages (e.g. specifying the number of daily prayers prescribed by Allah and other rules of Sharia [\[8\]](#)), and in some cases provided rulings on certain matters (e.g. prohibition of eating certain type of animal flesh). However, it should be noted here that throughout this process the Prophet did not make up his own message; the Quran makes it clear in the following first four verses of Surah An-Najm:

- *By the star when it goes down, (or vanishes).*
- *Your companion (Muhammad) has neither gone astray nor has erred.*
- *Nor does he speak of (his own) desire.*
- *It is only an Inspiration (revelation) that is inspired (revealed).*

To ascertain the authenticity of the Prophet's message that was passed on through his companions, Islamic scholars have stipulated various rules, which form the basis for ascertaining the authenticity of those narrations (hadith). Through this method, Sunni scholars validate the chain of narrations along with checking the integrity of the narrators as well. This involves assessing the character and lives of the narrators to ensure that their accounts could be trusted, the number of independent chains related to a message that traces back to the Prophet, and so on. Based on the various criteria, a hadith is then classed as strong, weak, false, etc. For example, a hadith classed as "tawattur" is considered the most authentic because the hadith traces back to the Prophet through multiple chains of narrations and

narrators whose integrity is established, making it unlikely for the hadith to be fabricated.

This method of ensuring the authenticity of the hadith is the cornerstone of the faith for the people of Sunnah (Sunni Muslims) as this ensures that the religion's message of the Quran and Prophet Muhammad's sayings is not diluted by other so-called scholars, Imams, or others. In fact, this science of authenticating hadith distinguishes people of the Sunnah from the other sects who have come to follow other Imams and so-called scholars without questioning the merit and source of their teachings. The Sunnis, therefore, ensure that all religious edicts have their roots documented in the Quran or hadith.

The people of Sunnah have been sensitive to follow the straight path as has been stressed in both the Quran and hadith. The Quran's first Surah (chapter) includes in it the important supplication for Muslims asking Allah to keep them on the straight path. According to a hadith, the Prophet once drew a straight line on the ground and referred to it as the path of truth. From that line, he drew many lines on the right and the left and told his companions that there is a devil at the head of each line and to avoid those lines, i.e. the different sects that would be formed based on innovations and false interpretations of the Quran [\[9\]](#) .

With time, as narrations became many, renowned scholars took it upon themselves to compile the ahadith (plural of hadith) in a book form. Notable among these scholars are Bukahri, Muslim, Ibn Hibban, Hakim, Ibn Majah, Nassai, etc. They ensured compilation of only Sahih (authenticated) hadith. There were other scholars who simply documented hadith with a full chain of narrations without commenting on the truthfulness of the narrators.

In Identifying various hadith, the hadith scholars of Sunni tradition have taken the effort to highlight the reasons for rejecting the hadith and the narrations. For example, they would specifically mention for a weak hadith that either the chain of the narration was broken or would identify some of the narrators in the chains as ones whose character known through history could not be deemed as trustworthy enough to be able to consider hadith communicated through them as reliable. In most of the cases, the six

scholars of hadith identified individuals in their books whose narrations (ahadith) should not be trusted because of various reasons.

One of the renowned scholars of hadith, Imam Al-Bukhari, died 245 years after the death of the Prophet. He documented all the authentic sayings of the Prophet by validating the isnaad (chain of narrations) and investigating the people who transmitted those narrations. Imam Al-Nawwawi mentioned that after the Quran, Sahih Al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim are to be considered the two most authentic books in Islam and Al-Bukhari is more reliable than Sahih Al-Muslim [\[10\]](#) .

Besides the books of hadith being a source of Islamic teachings, many scholars have authored Quranic interpretations based on authenticated hadith. These include works of Imam Muhammad Ibn Jareer al-Tabari, who authored Jaame al-Bayaan fi Taweel Aay il Quran, and Tafsir of the Majestic Quran, authored by Ibn Katheer.

The reason why the followers of Sunnah ensure that the authenticity of narrations trace back to the Prophet is primarily to ensure that the religion stays free of innovations or any heresy. According to the Quran, this has been one of the main reasons why previous nations had gone astray as people came after the Divine revelations where people authored their opinions and those messages got mixed up with the main revelations distorting it altogether.

The Quran says:

“Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say, “This is from Allah (God),” to purchase with it a little price! Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for that they earn thereby.” (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:79)

The Sunnis, therefore, are quite sensitive to provide the quotation of a Quranic verse or an authentic hadith when referencing a religious matter. Even when accepting the works of various Sunni scholars, references to the hadith and Quran are always expected before considering any work as authentic.

We see this in many instances in the history of Islam. In one case, for example, Abdullah Ibn Masood, who was one of the Prophet's companions, saw a group of people sitting in the mosque and praising Allah in a certain manner. When Abdullah Ibn Masood came to know about this, he corrected them by reprimanding them that they had innovated in the religion by starting a practice that the Prophet did not do himself [\[11\]](#) . Fearing the spread of such religious innovations therefore pushed the Prophet's companions and their followers to be careful in not innovating or introducing anything on their own in religious matters, fearing that they may innovate something that the Prophet had not approved of when relaying his message. For example, Abdullah Ibn Umar had stressed the fact that innovation in religion was to be considered an innovation even if the outward impact of it seemed good [\[12\]](#) . Abdullah Ibn Abbas warned the believers from sitting with people who would innovate in religion [\[13\]](#) and Muadh Ibn Jabal labeled all innovation matters as acts of misguidance [\[14\]](#) .

The Four Sunni Madhabs (Schools of Thoughts)

Sunnis follow four schools of thought (Madhabs) that are based on the four renowned scholars namely Imam Abu-Haneefah, Imam Malik, Imam al-Shafae and Imam Ahmad. Within the Sunnis, the difference between these four are not profound as they base their rulings and interpretation mostly on Quran and Hadiith. According to Sunni scholars [\[15\]](#) , the four branches of Sunni are similar as they all four agree on the fundamental of belief and Tawheed. They only differed in minor issues either based on their interpretations or because some did not have certain evidences (from the hadith) that others had when they gave their opinions on various matters. These four branches are therefore not considered sects and Sunnis in general do not restrict themselves in adhering to one specific scholar.

5 The Prophet's Life and Spread of Islam

As mentioned earlier, when the Prophet and His companions started to spread the message of Islam, Quraish resisted that message with ferocity and subjugated the early Muslims to great torture and persecution because this ideological earthquake had sought to shake the foundations of the beliefs of their ancestors. Besides, they also saw their sustenance tied to the pilgrims who would come to Makkah for pilgrimage to worship the idols that were placed in the Kaabah. They could not, therefore, tolerate undermining of the authority that they enjoyed over the pilgrims.

Abu Bakr was the first of the men to convert to Islam. As he was one of the nobles of Quraish, this was marked as an important event in the early history of Islam. Not only did he accept Islam, he openly declared his conversion at a time when many Muslims were hiding their conversion fearing persecution. Abu Bakr, therefore, became a source of inspiration and confidence to Muslims as well as to the Prophet.

As the Prophet's uncle, Abu-Talib, was a well-known and respected tribal leader, the Quraish leaders asked him to stop his nephew, Muhammad, from spreading the message of Islam, which was undermining their authority. Although, he never converted to Islam, Abu-Talib did not stop protecting and supporting his nephew. However, he kept trying to appease both sides.

The Quraish clans continued to plot to ensure that people were kept away from the message of Islam. One of the people who took the lead in ridiculing the message of the Prophet was Al-Waleed Ibn Al-Mugheerah. He would go out of his way to keep the pilgrims who used to visit Makkah away from the message of Islam. Al-Waleed was also involved in numerous plots to hurt the Prophet. About Al-Waleed, Allah revealed the following verses in the Quran (Surah Al-Muddathir, 74, 18:25):

- *Verily, he thought and plotted;*
- *So let him be cursed! How he plotted!*

- *And once more let him be cursed, how he plotted!*
- *Then he thought;*
- *Then he frowned and he looked in a bad tempered way;*
- *Then he turned back and was proud;*
- *Then he said: "This is nothing but magic from that of old;"*
- *"This is nothing but the word of a human being!"*

At the early onset of Islam, even the Prophet himself faced various forms of torture and humiliation. However, the Quraish and their accomplices were not able to kill the Prophet because either his companions came to his rescue or he was rescued through Divine miracles. Once, for example, Abu-Jahl, a renowned tribal leader who actively opposed the Prophet, proceeded to throw a large rock at the Prophet in an effort to kill him while he was praying. As Abu-Jahl's accomplices sat and watched, Abu-Jahl secretly approached the Prophet from the back. As he got nearer, his accomplices noticed Abu-Jahl's face turn pale and then saw him turning back in intense fear. Later, when Abu-Jahl was asked about the incident, he recalled seeing a frightful looking camel ready to devour him. The Prophet reported on the incident that it was the Angel Gabriel (Jibreel) and he surely would have had killed Abu-Jahl if he would have continued his approach to kill the Prophet.

Abu Bakr also faced family backlash after his acceptance of Islam. One of his wives, Qutaylah, and one of his sons, Abdul-Rehman, did not accept Islam, and because of that he divorced his wife.

Another reason for Quraish's anger was rooted in their jealousy for the Prophet. As he was from the Banu Hashim clan, leaders from the Banu Umayyah clan were not pleased with the prophethood going to Banu Hashim (even though both clans were part of the larger Quraish clan). In response to this, the Quran says:

"And they say: 'Why is not this Quran sent down to some great man of the two towns?' Is it they who would portion out the Mercy

of your Lord?” (Suran Al-Zukhruf, 43:31)

The “two towns” in this verse refers to Makkah and Taif (both in present-day Saudi Arabia). So, in this verse they clearly were questioning why the Divine message was not sent to their elite. Allah then responds with a rhetorical question that only He can apportion His mercy (choosing whom to send the revelation to) on whom He pleased.

Although the message of Islam is universal in its nature, its message and the rights that it provided immediately resonated with the poor and women who earlier were subjugated to all forms of cruelty and persecution in the pre-Islamic period. For example, a number of slaves who had converted to Islam started to face constant torture by their non-Muslim captors. People like Abu Bakr then helped in buying and freeing many of those Muslim slaves. The early converts, therefore, were an easy target for the Quraish and the people in and around Makkah. However, a few years into the revelation, two of the most prominent tribal leaders, named Humza Ibn Al-Muttalib and Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, embraced Islam. This strengthened the early Muslims’ morale and they became even more open about their faith and in the spread of their faith. When Allah asked Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims to invite others to become open to their faith, Abu Bakr was the first to deliver the message of the Prophet in front of an audience of idol worshippers in Makkah. In response, the idol worshippers rushed at Abu Bakr and beat him until he lost consciousness. Although he belonged to a powerful clan who protected him, he continued to face persecution at the hands of other Quraish clans during his stay in Makkah.

As for Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, although initially he ardently opposed the message of Islam and the Prophet, two specific incidents steered his heart toward the message of Islam. In the first incident, Umar heard the Prophet recite the following Quran verses of Surah Al-Haqqah:

- ***That this is verily the word of an honored Messenger [i.e. Jibrael (Gabriel) or Muhammad which he has brought from Allah].***
- ***It is not the word of a poet, little is that you believe!***

- *Nor is it the word of a soothsayer (or a foreteller), little is that you remember!*
- *This is the Revelation sent down from the Lord of the Aalamin (the worlds of mankind and all that exists).*

Although these verses touched his heart and made him contemplate the message of Islam, as time passed, he returned on his earlier ways to oppose the Prophet and the message of Islam. On one occasion, he became angry with the Prophet thinking that he had broken the unity in the ranks of the Quraish by introducing a new religion. In his rage, he set out to kill the Prophet. However, on his way he came to know that his sister, Fatima, and her husband had also become Muslims. This further enraged him, and he first headed to handle that situation before continuing to kill the Prophet. As he approached his sister's house, he heard the Quranic recitation coming from their house. On hearing this, he entered their house and mercilessly beat his brother-in-law. When his sister came to protect her husband, he hit her on the head as well. However, seeing her bloodied face calmed him down and he asked them to recite what they were reciting earlier. When asked, they recited the Quranic verses of Sura Taha (Chapter 20). As they recited, the following verse had an impact on him:

"Verily! I am Allah! La ilaha illa Ana' (none has the right to be worshipped but I), so worship Me, and perform As-Salat (Prayers) for My Remembrance." (Surah Taha, 20:14)

On hearing the verses from Surah Taha, his heart succumbed to the message of Islam and he went to the Prophet to proclaim the message of Islam. Umar's conversion was a big blow to the Quraish not only because he was one of the most knowledgeable and courageous people in their ranks, but also because Abu-Jahl (Islam's most ardent rival) was Umar's maternal uncle.

5.1 Migration from Makkah

The increasing hostilities of the Quraish started to take its toll and made life even more difficult for the new Muslims. As most of these early Muslims were from the poorer families, they had little or no protection from the powerful idol worshippers and leaders of the Quraish. During the Prophet's time, Muslims migrated from Makkah twice. The first migration was to Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia), while the second was to Madinah, which ultimately became the base of the Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula for years to come. The following covers the two migrations.

First Migration to Ethiopia

Facing early hostilities from the people of Makkah, Prophet Muhammad advised the new Muslims to migrate from Makkah to Abyssinia (present-day Ethiopia). The Prophet chose Abyssinia because he had heard about its Christian King Negus (Najashi) as being just and God fearing. This migration took place in 615 CE, or seven years before the Prophet's migration to Madinah, and included 83 Muslims under the leadership of Jafar Ibn Abu-Talib.

Fearing that the Abyssinian King would give refuge and protection to the new Muslims, the Quraish sent an envoy under Amr Ibn Al-Aas, [\[16\]](#) who was known for his diplomatic skills, to the King of Abyssinia with precious gifts. At the court of King Negus, Amr Ibn Al-Aas presented the group of migrants as convicted criminals who were wanted in the court of law in Makkah. Hearing this, the king summoned the new Muslims. When asked to present their case to the king, Jafar Ibn Abu-Talib responded with his famous speech in which he described how Arabs were living a life of ignorance and how Prophet Muhammad, the last prophet, taught them about one God, kindness, respect and trustworthiness. He told the King that because of the Prophet's preaching of the Divine revelation, Quraish persecuted and tortured them, and this is why they sought refuge under the king [\[17\]](#) .

Inspired and impressed by his speech, King Negus then asked them to recite verses from the Quran related to Jesus and Mary. At this, Jafar Ibn Abu-Talib recited the verses from Surah (Chapter) Maryam (Virgin Mary), verses 19 to 22, where the angel sent from Allah gives Maryam the glad tidings for a son (Jesus) even though no man had ever touched her. The Quranic recitation from Jafar about the story of Mary brought King Negus and his council members to tears. On this, Amr Ibn Al-Aas then accused the Muslims of not respecting Jesus the way Christians did. When asked, the Muslims responded by stating that they believed Jesus as God's servant and his messenger rather than the son of God, as is mentioned in the Quran. The Quran says about Jesus:

“It befits not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glorified (and Exalted be He above all that they associate with Him). When He decrees a thing, He only says to it, “Be!” and it is.” Surah Maryam (19:35)

Satisfied by what he had heard from Jafar, the king thus granted the Muslims protection under his rule and turned away Amr Ibn Al-Aas and the rest of Quraish's delegation, leaving them empty handed.

The Muslim migrants lived peacefully under the protection of the king for 15 years before they migrated to Madinah in 7 AH – 628 CE. Later, on learning more about the Quran's message and after the Prophet had sent him a letter calling him to Islam, the Christian king accepted Islam. After a few years, when the king died, the Prophet led his funeral prayers in absentia.

Second Migration to Madinah

After the first migration to Abyssinia, Islam gradually started to spread throughout the Arabian Peninsula. However, the conditions of Muslims in Makkah did not improve and the Quraish continued to grow more hostile against Muslims. Then, in the year 622 CE, more than 70 Muslims arrived in Makkah to meet Prophet Muhammad, pledged their allegiance to him,

and invited him to migrate to Madinah. This event came to be known in history as the second Pledge of Al-Aqaba [18] . Later, Prophet Muhammad dreamed about his migration to a place where there were plenty of palm trees [19] . The Prophet took this as Allah's approval of his migration to Madinah and thus asked the Muslims in Makkah to migrate towards Madinah. The first people to migrate to Madinah were Musaab Ibn Umayr, Ammar, Bilal, Saad and then Umar Ibn Al-Khattab with twenty more immigrants [20] .

The Prophet, on the other hand, stayed behind and was among the last few to remain in Makkah along with Abu Bakr, Zaid, Suhayb, Ali and a few others. Knowing that Muslims were slowly slipping away and migrating out of the city, the Quraish eventually planned to kill Prophet Muhammad in a secret meeting that was attended by major clans of Quraish. This meeting later came to be known as the 'Council of Dar-al-Nadwah' [21] .

However, during the same night, the Prophet decided to leave Makkah for Madinah. He asked Ali Ibn Abu-Talib (his cousin and son of his uncle Abu-Talib) to sleep in his bed. The Prophet then moved to the outskirts of Makkah with Abu Bakr. When the group from the Quraish came to kill the Prophet, they instead found Ali Ibn Abu-Talib sleeping in his bed. Disappointed with this failure, they dispatched numerous search parties in all directions. They even announced a reward of one hundred camels for the one who found the Prophet and Abu Bakr.

To evade the search parties of Quraish, Prophet Muhammad and Abu Bakr went in the opposite direction toward Yemen and avoided the northern route to Madinah. They hid in a cave on Jabal (Mount) Thawr. While in hiding, one of the search parties reached the mouth of the cave and came very close to finding them. That was the time when this verse in the Quran was revealed:

“If you help him (Muhammad) not (it does not matter), for Allah did indeed help him when the disbelievers drove him out, the second of the two; when they (Muhammad and Abu Bakr) were in the cave, he said to his companion (Abu Bakr): ‘Be not sad (or afraid), surely, Allah is with us.’ Then Allah sent down His Sakeenah (calmness, tranquility, peace) upon him, and

strengthened him with forces (angels) which you saw not, and made the word of those who disbelieved the lowermost, while the Word of Allah that became the uppermost; and Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise”. (Surah Al-Tawbah, 9:40)

Abu Bakr stayed with Prophet Muhammad in the cave for three days, after which they began their journey to Madinah along with Amir Ibn Fuharya, Abu Bakr's slave, and Abdullah Ibn Urayqat, the guide that Abu Bakr had hired for their trip.

With many parties looking for the Prophet and Abu Bakr, an Arab named Suraqqah Ibn Malik (someone sent by the Quraish to look for the Prophet) was finally able to find them in the middle of the desert. What followed was narrated by Ibn Shihaab to Abdul-Rahman Ibn Malik, who was the nephew of Suraqqah. Abdul-Rahman heard the story of the event told by his uncle (Suraqqah) to his father.

Suraqqah explained that during his search for the Prophet, he was able to find the small group of the Prophet and Abu Bakr as they were heading to Madinah. As he got closer to them, Suraqqah wanted to harm them but his horse stumbled and Suraqqah fell from it. He regained his position but then his horse's forelegs sank into the sand up to his knees. As he faced such difficulties, Suraqqah sensed and realized that an invisible force was protecting the Prophet. Therefore, Suraqqah called upon the Prophet and Abu Bakr to let them know that they were safe. On hearing this, they stopped, and the Prophet asked him not to inform anyone of their whereabouts. Impressed by the Prophet, Suraqqah asked the Prophet to guarantee his security in the future if he needed one. Of this, the Prophet agreed and then asked their guide, Aamir Ibn Fuhayrah, who was accompanying them, to write it on his behalf.

After days of travel, the four reached Quba, which is a small town on the outskirts of Madinah. They stayed in Quba for four days where Ali Ibn Abu-Talib also joined them from Makkah. While at Quba, the Prophet stayed with Banu Amr Ibn Awf. During his stay, the Prophet established the first

place of worship, or a mosque in Islam, that later became known as “The Mosque of Quba”. It was the first mosque established by the Prophet.

The Mosque of Quba holds a prominent place in the history of Islam. Most Muslims who visit Madinah try and visit this mosque to reap the rewards because its significance is documented both in the Quran and the hadith. Books on Hadith Bukhari (1193) and Muslim (1399) mentioned that according to Abdullah Ibn Umar, the Prophet used to go to this mosque every Saturday, walking or riding, and would pray there.

The Prophet, along with his companions from Makkah, entered Madinah after Friday prayers and was received by a jubilant crowd of Muslim men, women and children. These natives of Madinah are also referred to as ‘Ansar’ (helpers – who helped and gave aid to the Muhajireen), whereas the people who migrated to Madinah from Makkah are referred to as ‘Muhajireen’ (immigrants). Everyone in Madinah wanted Prophet Muhammad to stay with them, but the Prophet decided that he would stay where his she-camel would stop at the will of Allah. After roaming in the city, the camel stopped at Abu-Ayyub Ansari’s house and that is where the Prophet decided to stay. Later, the foundation of the Prophet’s mosque in Madinah was laid where his she-camel first knelt down.

Life in Madinah was quite different than in Makkah primarily because the Prophet was amongst his supporters and close companions. In this hospitable climate, the Prophet started teaching Islam to the inhabitants of the city. The message of Islam gradually started to spread in the region and more tribes and clans started to come to know about the Prophet and the message of Islam that he was preaching to all.

5.2 Key Battles with the Quraish of Makkah

The Muslims’ migration from Makkah did not stop the Quraish from thinking about them. They continued to be restless and kept plotting to hurt the Muslims and the Prophet in various ways. This hostility eventually led to many battles between the Quraish of Makkah and the new Muslims who

had now settled in the city of Madinah. The following sections cover the key battles that the Prophet and his companions fought with the Quraish after his migration to Madinah.

The Battle of Badr

The Battle of Badr was the first battle that the Prophet and his companions fought with the Quraish in the second year after migration (2 AH) in the year 624 CE. Although the Muslims were still low in number, their frustration of years of persecution had crossed the limits of their patience and they increasingly felt ready to confront the non-believers from the Quraish.

Tensions initially flared when facing continuous harassment from the Quraish; some of the Muslims decided to intercept a caravan that Abu-Sufyan was leading. The Prophet set out with a little more than three hundred men. Abu-Sufyan sent a message to Makkah asking for reinforcements for his caravan. Abu-Jahl, the leader of the Quraish and an archenemy of the Prophet, found an opportunity to engage in a fight with the Muslims. Thus, he prepared an army of more than a thousand men and led the army toward Madinah to save their caravan. He swore in the name of Al-Laat and Al-Uzza (the idols that the Quraish used to worship) that he would not return to Makkah until he killed the Prophet and wiped out Islam from the region.

Both parties then met at Badr, an area situated 170 kilometers southwest of Madinah. The battle began with three leaders stepping forward from both sides. The ones who stepped forward from Quraish were Utbah Ibn Rabiah (a senior Quraish leader), Shaibah Ibn Rabiah (Utbah's brother), and Waleed Ibn Utbah (Utbah's son). The three from the Muslim side included Humza Ibn Abdul-Muttalib (prophet's uncle), Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, and Ubaidah Ibn Al-Harith. Humza engaged Shaibah in a duel, while Ali engaged with Waleed, and Ubaidah engaged with Utbah. Both Humza and Ali killed their counterparts, while Utbah seriously wounded Ubaidah. Humzah then killed Utbah and Ubaidah died a few days later due to the

seriousness of the injuries. After this, the fight opened up for all on the two sides.

As the battle raged, the smaller Muslim army overwhelmed the large number of the Quraish and their soldiers. Despite the greater numbers of the forces from Quraish, the Muslims killed many prominent Makkan leaders and captured a number of them as well. Losses from the Quraish of Makkah included Utbah, Abu-Jahl, Waleed, and others. Two young teenagers, who specifically came looking for Abu-Jahl, killed him in the battle. Abu-Jahl's son, Ikramah Ibn Abu-Jahal, stepped forward to take revenge but all he was able to do was sever one of the teenager's arms. As the Quraish's army started to flee, Ikramah fled with the Quraish army and headed back to Makkah. The Muslims thus became decisively victorious over the Quraish.

This battle is regarded as a major event in Islamic history and has references in the Quran as well. The Quran states how Allah helped the Muslims in Badr by sending angels who fought alongside the Muslims.

- *And Allah has already made you victorious at Badr, when you were a weak little force. So fear Allah much that you may be grateful.*
- *(Remember) when you (Muhammad) said to the believers, "Is it not enough for you that your Lord (Allah) should help you with three thousand angels; sent down?" (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:123, 124)*

The Muslims lost less than fifteen men from their ranks. On this day, the Prophet also lost his daughter, Ruqayyah, after a prolonged illness. It was because of that illness that Uthman Ibn Affan (one of the Prophet's companions and Ruqayyah's husband) could not participate in the battle.

This battle hurt the prestige of the Quraish and strengthened the political position of Muslims in Madinah and nearby areas. As time passed, Muslims increased in number that in turn strengthened their position in the Arabian Peninsula.

The Battle of Uhud

As the defeat at Badr had left the Quraish quite humiliated, their leader Abu-Sufyan took an oath that he would abstain from all forms of entertainment and pleasure until he avenged the defeat from the Muslims. Hind bint Utbah, Abu-Sufyan's wife, was the most furious. This was because the battle of Badr had not only humiliated her husband Abu Sufyan, who was the leader of the Quraish, but she also lost her father Utbah, her brother Waleed, and her uncle Shaibah. Thus, she became one of the primary instigators calling for revenge. Quraish, therefore, started equipping and training themselves with a new army in a bid to face Muslims once again and to destroy the threat.

Finally, a year after the battle of Badr, a new Quraish army felt ready to face the Muslims in another combat. Then, in 625 CE (3 AH), Abu-Sufyan left Makkah with three thousand seasoned warriors with the intention of annihilating the Muslims, the Islamic religion and their Prophet. The primary leaders of this military caravan included Abu-Sufyan as the main leader, Ikramah Ibn Abu-Jahl (Ikramah, son of Abu-Jahl, who was killed in the Battle of Badr), and Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed as the commander of the fighting force. Their war caravan also included a band of women for entertainment, whose task was to sing and incite the will of their fighters through psychological warfare against Muslims by reading poetry and singing amatory songs. They arrived with their army contingent at the area of Uhud. This area is named after Mount Uhud, which is located a few miles north of the city of Madinah.

The Muslims initially prepared a force of one thousand men. However, later, Abdullah ibn Ubay, with his three hundred soldiers, backed away and was regarded as a hypocrite. The Prophet, therefore, readied for the battle with around seven hundred men.

Due to the nature of the terrain around the mountain, the Prophet deployed his forces at various strategic locations. In one specific case, he deployed about fifty marksmen on one of the slopes of the Mount of Uhud. These marksmen were especially instructed to secure that mountain passage from any incursions until their mission was specifically called off.

As the battle started, the Muslims had an early advantage and inflicted heavy losses in the ranks of the Quraish fighters. This caused chaos in the Quraish army who were forced to retreat once again. As the Quraish's army started to flee, the Muslim army started to collect the war booty that the Quraish's army was leaving behind. Seeing this, most marksmen who were positioned on the mountain pass abandoned their positions and rushed to collect their share of the war booty too. Noticing this new opening, Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed, who was a commander in the Quraish army (but later became a Muslim) made use of the opportunity, and quickly turned his men around and used that mountain pass to attack the Muslims from behind. This turned the tide of the battle against the Muslims as they found themselves sandwiched between Khalid's forces from the back and the Quraish from the front. This resulted in many Muslims getting killed, which ultimately forced them to retreat. More confusion and chaos followed when a rumor spread that the Prophet had been killed. All this led to low morale and ultimately caused the Muslims to lose the battle.

A Quranic revelation pointed this oversight by the Muslims in the following verse:

“(And remember) when you ran away (dreadfully) without even casting a side glance at anyone, and the Messenger (Muhammad) was in your rear calling you back. There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital to teach you not to grieve for that which had escaped you, nor for that which had befallen you. And Allah is Well-Aware of all that you do.” (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:153)

The Battle of Uhud, therefore, ended with the Quraish being victorious. A number of notable companions died in this battle. Amongst them was Hamza Ibn Al-Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle. He was killed by an Abyssinian slave named Wahshi Ibn Harb. He was hired by Hind Bint Utbah (Hind, daughter of Utbah, and Abu-Sufyan's wife) in revenge for Hamza killing her father Utbah and uncle Shaibah in the battle of Badr.

The loss in this battle gave the three hundred hypocrites (claiming to be Muslims), who had withdrawn from the Muslim army, the excuse to be critical of the divine decree to go for the battle and to justify their action of not joining the battle. In their response, the following Quranic verse was revealed in the Quran:

“Say: Even if you had remained in your homes, those for whom death was decreed would certainly have gone forth to the place of their death.” (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:154)

The Battle of the Ditch (Al-Khandaq)

Overjoyed by their victory in the Battle of Uhud, the confident Quraish wanted to continue to inflict more damage to the Muslims. In that pursuit, the heads of Quraish persuaded a number of other Arab Bedouin tribes in the Hejaz region to join them in their cause of annihilating Islam and its followers. After days of negotiations, they were able to amass an army of ten thousand and headed towards Madinah to engage the Muslims in another battle in the year 627 CE. This third battle was the largest and the last attempt by the Quraish to defeat the Muslims in Madinah in the hopes of stemming the rise of the Muslims.

As the Muslims contemplated how to face this large approaching army, the Prophet sought his companions' advice. Based on the suggestion of one of his prominent companions, [Salman](#) Al-Farsi (a Persian revert to Islam), he decided to avoid a direct confrontation and instead ordered the digging of a ditch around the city. The strategy was to prevent the Quraish armies from storming the city head on. The inhabitants of the city dug this ditch in a period of three weeks. Thus, this battle was named 'Battle of the Ditch' (Al-Khandaq in Arabic).

As the Quraish approached Madinah, the large and deep ditch around the city took the Quraish army by surprise and disrupted their plans. The Quraish soldiers who attempted to cross the ditch became easy targets of the Muslim archers on the other side. Furthermore, the forces of the Quraish had not come prepared to lay a siege of the city in a harsh desert environment. Eventually they withdrew after a few weeks, as the armies of

the Quraish could not continue the siege due to dwindling supplies that had also started to fuel resentment between their allied tribes. As the weather, too, was getting colder and windier, they found it harder to keep their tents and related gear in place. Therefore, the Quraish and their allies lost heart, decided to withdraw their troops, and retreated to Makkah. The battle also caused enormous hardship on the Muslims because of the drought-like conditions, which had occurred due to a halt in trading activities.

The Quran mentions this battle in the following verses:

- *When they came upon you from above you and from below you, and when the eyes grew wild and the hearts reached to the throats, and you were harboring doubts about Allah.*
- *There, the believers were tried and shaken with a mighty shaking.*
(*Surah Al-Ahzab, 33:10-11*)

The Quraish's inability to meet their objectives and goals strengthened the Muslims' position beyond Madinah to other locations in the Arabian Peninsula and Islam continued to spread throughout the various regions of Arabia.

5.3 Peace Treaty with the Quraish of Makkah

By 628 CE (6 AH), the number of Muslims exceeded one thousand in just the city of Madinah. The rising population and a strong performance in the battles that the Muslims had fought with the Quraish and their regional allies provided the Muslims more confidence in facing the Quraish. The Prophet, therefore, decided to take the new Muslims in Madinah for their first Umrah (small pilgrimage to Makkah). However, considering their experiences in dealing with the non-believers of the Quraish, the new Muslims did not expect this to be easy.

As the Prophet started the three-hundred mile journey toward Makkah, he learned that the Quraish had mobilized forces to prevent the Muslims from entering Makkah. The Quraish had prepared an army unit and sent it in the command of Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed (their war hero in the Battle of Uhud) with a small army to confront the Muslims and to stop them from approaching Makkah.

Despite the looming threat, the Prophet and his companions continued with their plans but used a different and uncommon route to head towards Makkah. Once they reached the place of Al-Hudaibiyah, a place 17 kilometers north of Makkah, the Prophet's camel, Qaswa, refused to move forward. The Muslims decided to camp at Al-Hudaibiyah. As they waited in Al-Hudaibiyah, many delegations on behalf of the Quraish started to visit the Prophet and the Muslims to discourage them from entering Makkah.

The Prophet then decided to send Uthman Ibn Affan, a prominent companion from Banu Umayyah and his son-in-law, to Makkah to explain to the Quraish about their intent, which was simply for them to make Umrah (small pilgrimage) in the Haram Mosque (where Kaabah is located) and then to return to Madinah. When Uthman went to Makkah to deliver the message, the Quraish asked him to stay longer to give them time to consider the request. However, this delay resulted in a rumor that the Quraish had killed Uthman. Not knowing whether this was true or not, the Prophet took this news hard and considered it as an act of war. In response, the Prophet asked the Muslims to prepare for war with the Quraish.

As they prepared for war, the Prophet took an oath from all of his companions to fight with the Quraish until death to take revenge for Uthman. This incident, known as the 'Pledge of Ridwan [\[22\]](#)' or 'Bayaa Al-Ridwan' in Arabic, is mentioned in the Quran in the following verse.

“Indeed, Allah was pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto you beneath the tree. He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down As-Sakinah (calmness and tranquility) upon them, and He rewarded them with a near victory”. (Surah Al-Fath, 48:18)

Shortly thereafter, Uthman Ibn Affan returned to the Muslim camp. When the Quraish learned about the pledge that Muslims had made to fight the Quraish until death, they decided to avert the war that they had been planning for when they had sent Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed to fight the Muslims, and decided to resolve the situation through a peaceful resolution. After a series of meetings that followed with the Quraish, Prophet Muhammad agreed to sign a peace treaty with the Quraish.

The following verse was revealed describing the situation at that time:

“And it is Allah who restrained their hands from you and your hands from them in the midst of Makkah, and after that He gave you victory over them.” (Surah Al-Fath, 48:24)

After negotiations with the Quraish, the Prophet agreed on a number of points. The most prominent terms of the treaty (known as the Al-Hudaibiyah Treaty) were as follows.

1. Muslims had to return to Madinah that year without performing Umrah. However, they could return next year for a period of three days. They would bring no weapons except swords in their covers.
2. The truce would be in effect for a period of 10 years and both parties would suspend hostilities for that period.
3. Any new converts to Islam from Makkah who would escape to Madinah would have to be returned to the Quraish in Makkah. However, the Quraish would not return any Muslim who became a non-believer and returned to Makkah.
4. During the period of the treaty, neither party would inflict any damage on the other.

As the treaty was being written, the Prophet asked Suhayl Ibn Amr, who was representing the Quraish, to write at the beginning of the document in Arabic “Bismillah hir Rahman Ar-Raheem”, which means “In the name of Allah, the most Beneficent, the most Merciful.” However, Suhayl objected to writing the words ‘Rahman’ (the most Beneficent) and said that he did

not recognize a God named ‘Rahman’. The Prophet reluctantly accepted his argument but the companions of the Prophet protested. However, in the interest of having a peace agreement, the Prophet agreed to the statement, “In the Name of Allah.” Later, when the document was complete and as they were signing the agreement, the Prophet referred to himself as “Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah (God)”. However, Suhayl objected to this again and wanted to remove “Messenger of God”. His objection was that if they (the non-believers of the Quraish) had recognized the Prophet as the “Messenger of God”, then there would not be any hostilities to begin with. To this, the Prophet made a verbal statement that affirmed his position as Messenger of Allah but then agreed to replace that line with “Muhammad, son of Abdullah.” On this, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, who was writing the agreement and representing the Prophet and the Muslims, did not agree and resisted to change the Prophet’s title. However, once again, in the interest of having a peace agreement, the Prophet agreed to Suhayl’s demands and the agreement was finalized between the two parties.

Initially, the Muslims were not happy with the signing of the treaty because they felt that the Prophet had given the Quraish too many concessions. After the agreement, the son of Suhayl, Abu-Jandal, who had recently become a Muslim and had just arrived from Makkah, was returned to his father and the Quraish under the new agreement. His father then dragged Abu-Jandal in chains back to Makkah. Witnessing such incidents and the fact that the Muslims were returning to Madinah without performing Umrah (small pilgrimage) in Makkah, deeply saddened the Muslims.

As part of the pilgrimage rituals, it was customary to sacrifice animals and to shave the heads. Although the Muslims did not perform Umrah (small pilgrimage), after the treaty, the Prophet asked the Muslims to slaughter their animals. When asked of this, no one responded due to their sorrow and unhappiness. Seeing this, the Prophet himself sacrificed his animal and shaved his head after which the Muslims followed him.

Although the Muslims were quite saddened, Allah declared this event a great success and, as a result, Surah Al-Fath (Chapter 48) was revealed, the first verse of which is the following:

“Verily, We (Allah) have granted you (Prophet Muhammad) a manifest victory” (Surah Fath, 48:1)

This verse also provided comfort to Muslims at that time. In his commentary, Ibn Al-Kathir (a renowned Islamic scholar) reported from Jabir Ibn Abdullah that they considered this treaty to be a day of Fath (victory) rather than the conquest of Makkah that came a few years later. This was due to the many longer-term benefits that this treaty brought to the Muslims.

Even though the Prophet’s companions were deeply saddened by the terms of the treaty, it benefited Muslims in the future in many ways. For example, with the peace treaty in effect, Muslims were free to invite others to Islam without any fear of persecution. As a result, over the next two years, Islam spread throughout Arabia and many more joined the Islamic faith.

After a few months, the Quraish started to violate various terms of the treaty. Muslims were becoming convinced that the Quraish was not keen to respect the terms of the treaty. In one incident, the clan of [Banu Bakr](#), who were Quraish allies, attacked the Bedouin [Khuza](#) clan, which was allied with the Muslims. According to the terms of the treaty, this was considered a violation of the agreement. Based on such incidences, the treaty lasted only for two years. However, during this period, the Muslims had already made quite a headway in spreading Islam to other regions of Arabia and to the outside regions as well.

5.4 The Prophet Sends Invitation of Islam to Various Rulers

The one immediate benefit of the treaty was that it enabled Muslims to take the message of Islam more freely without the fear of being attacked from the clans of Quraish or their allies. The Prophet used this opportunity to take the message of Islam to far-off places and sent letters to the kings and rulers who ruled on lands beyond the Arabian Peninsula. After receiving

advice from some companions, Prophet Muhammad designed a new silver seal with the words “Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah” to use on the letters. A copy of a number of these letters is widely available even today. The Prophet sent letters to the following rulers through his various messengers in the year 628 CE (6 AH).

- **Negus, King of Abyssinia** (present-day Ethiopia) with Amr Ibn Umaiyah – The timing of the letter to Negus, King of Abyssinia, is believed to be before the Treaty of Al-Hudaibiya.
- **Al-Mundhir Ibn Sawa, Ruler of Bahrain** with Al-Ala Ibn Al-Hadrami – The ruler of Bahrain accepted Islam along with some of his people. He also asked for the Prophet’s advice about the treatment of non-Muslims living in his kingdom.
- **Chosroes (Khusro Pervez) of Persia** (Al-Madain, which is near present-day Baghdad, Iraq) with Abdullah Ibn Hudhafah – When Chosroes (ruler of a super power) received the letter, he became furious when he saw the Prophet’s name written before his name and tore the letter in his anger. He ordered one of his governors in Yemen to send two men to the Prophet and to arrest him and bring him to his court. When the two men reached Madinah, the Prophet told them that Chosroes was recently killed by his own son. The two men returned and told the news to Bazan, governor of Yemen, who did not know of this news. Later, when this news was confirmed, Bazan was greatly impressed by this miracle (that the Prophet knew about this recent incident before anyone else), and thus converted to Islam along with other Persians in Yemen.
- **Heraclius (Jerusalem), Caesar of the Roman (Byzantine) Empire** with Dihyah Al-Kalbi – After receiving the letter, Heraclius asked Abu-Sufyan, the Quraish leader who was still an idol worshipper at that time, about the Prophet, his lineage and his message. Convinced with what he learned from Abu-Sufyan, Heraclius gave a long speech in favor of the Prophet in which he said that if the Prophet indeed was on the path of truth, the Prophet would eventually capture the area that Heraclius was ruling. According to historians, this speech made Heraclius’ close confidants unhappy. Fearing a

rebellion and the general reaction of his people, Heraclius kept his faith and did not convert to Islam.

- **Al-Muqawqis (Alexandria), the Ruler of Egypt** with Hatib Ibn Abi Baltah – After receiving the letter, the ruler of Egypt treated the messenger with respect. He even stored his letter in an ivory box. That letter was then sold to others and copies of it are widely available. Although Muqawqis was quite impressed by the Prophet's message, and sent him gifts, he did not accept Islam.
- **Abd and Jayfar (two brothers), Rulers of Oman** with Amr Ibn Al-Aas – The two brothers, Jayfar and Abd were the kings of Oman. They accepted Islam after contemplating on the letter that they received from the Prophet.
- **Hawdah Ibn Ali, Ruler of Yamama** (near present-day Riyadh, Saudi Arabia) with Sulait Ibn Amr – The governor of Yamama acknowledged the message sent by the Prophet but then asked for a role in the 'government of the Prophet'. His interest, therefore, seemed to be in increasing his power rather than converting to Islam.
- **Al-Harith Ibn Abi Shamir Al-Gassani, the Ruler of Damascus** (present-day Syria) with Shuja Ibn Wahb – On receiving the letter, the King of Damascus, Al-Harith Ibn Abi Shamir became angry with the message of the letter and showed his intent to fight the Muslims. As Syria was under the Byzantine rule, he asked the permission of Emperor Heraclius to launch a military campaign against Muslims, but Heraclius denied the request.
- **The Ruler of Basrah** (southern city of present-day Iraq) with Harith Ibn Umayr Azdi – This letter was intercepted by a tribal chief, Sharhabil Al-Ghassani (from the Ghassanid dynasty), who was an ally of the Byzantines. He arrested and killed Harith. As killing of the messengers was considered a crime, in response, the Prophet prepared and went to battle against the ruler's tribe. This battle came to be known as the 'Battle of Muthah' (covered in 5.6).

5.5 The Conquest of Khaibar (Jewish Tribes)

Khaibar is a small oasis situated approximately less than 130 kilometers north of the city of Madinah. During Prophet Muhammad's time, a number of Jewish tribes lived in the oasis of Khaibar. These tribes included the tribes of Banu Nadir, who had descended from the Children of Levi, and Banu Khuraida. These tribes had settled many years ago when a group of them had migrated from Palestine after the destruction of their temple in Jerusalem. They had turned this oasis into a major trading hub. This land was quite fertile and allowed the Jews to cultivate fruits and vegetation and raise animals.

After the signing of the treaty with the Quraish, the Prophet turned his attention to the remaining threats. The Jews of Khaibar had not only been instigating and provoking others in the Hejaz region against the Muslims in Madinah, they had even attempted to take the Prophet's life. Although the Prophet had sent numerous peace delegations to them in a bid to put an end to these hostilities, this did not have any effect. Finally, it reached a point where the Prophet and his companions decided to go to battle with the tribes of Khaibar.

As the Prophet became busy preparing for the military expedition to Khaibar, the Arab hypocrites in Madinah led by Abdullah Ibn Ubay, who had also turned against Muslims earlier in the Battle of Uhud, alerted the Jews of the battle preparations against them. This led the Jews to start preparing for the battle as well.

After preparing a force of fourteen-hundred men, in the year 7 AH or 628 CE, Prophet Muhammad marched towards Khaibar. The Jews in Khaibar used to live in a number of small and large fortified castles, most of which were on higher ground that made them virtually unconquerable.

As the battle started, the Muslim forces won one castle after another and the Jewish forces kept escaping from one castle to another until they reached the largest one where they hid and fought for a few days. A few Jewish spies helped the Muslims in penetrating the fort, after which the Muslims conquered that castle as well.

While they were fighting at their last stronghold, the Jews negotiated with the Muslims for peace. Prophet Muhammad allowed them a safe passage to

go into exile. The Prophet also allowed the fleeing Jews to carry whatever they could carry on their horses including gold and silver. The Hebrew scripture found at the citadels were also returned to Jews on their request. Later, Prophet Muhammad married the widow of one of the Jewish leaders (Kinanah bin Abi Al-Huqaiq), Safiyah bint Huyay [\[23\]](#) . As the Jews were being expelled from Khaibar, some of their leaders requested the Prophet to let them stay in Khaibar and in return they agreed to pay him half of what they reaped from the cultivated land. The Prophet agreed to this and divided the lands accordingly.

After winning the battle, a Jewish woman named Zainab bint al-Haarith offered the Prophet meat as a token of celebration for his victory. The Prophet ate only a little from that meat before he realized that it was poisoned. Although the Prophet did not die from that poisoning at that time, he felt the effects of the poison until the end, as he told his wife, Aisha. [\[24\]](#)

According to the reported sources, less than twenty Muslims were killed in this battle along with ninety-three Jews [\[25\]](#) .

5.6 *The First Battle with the Romans (Byzantines)*

As was mentioned earlier, one of the Prophet's envoys who took the message of Islam to various rulers around the region was Haritha Ibn Umayr Al-Azdi. On his way to Basrah, which at the time was part of the Sassanid Persian Empire, he was intercepted and killed by the chief of the Ghassanids, Sharhabil. Ghassanids were Arab Christian tribes that lived in the north of present-day Saudi Arabia. The Ghassanid territory lay between the Byzantine Empire and the Arabian Peninsula.

The news of Haritha's killing shocked and saddened Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims because killing of envoys was considered a crime. The Prophet, therefore, prepared a military campaign in September 629 CE (8 AH) to avenge his unprovoked killing and prepared a force of three thousand men [\[26\]](#) under the command of his adopted son Zaid Ibn Haritha

[27] . He named his cousin, Jafar Ibn Abu-Talib (brother of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib), and Abdullah Ibn Rawaha as Zaid's successors.

The initial battle plan was to fight the local tribe that was under the command of Sharhabil. However, before the Prophet's forces could reach the Ghassanid territory near southern Jordan, Sharhabil had asked the Christian Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius, for military assistance, to which he agreed. As a result, on reaching the area of Muthah the Muslim forces faced two hundred thousand of the Byzantine and Ghassanid allied forces, which had amassed to face three thousand of the Muslim forces. After seeing the large number of forces of the Byzantine army and local tribes, the Muslim forces halted their further movement.

Initially, the Muslims were quite hesitant to confront such a large army. However, Abdullah Ibn Rawaha (one of the three commanders) delivered an inspirational speech after which the Muslims decided to engage the Byzantine and Ghassanid armies despite their small numbers. As the battle started, all three Muslim commanders died in the fierce fight within a short duration. With all three commanders killed, they appointed Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed as their commander, who, as mentioned earlier, had fought the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud before his conversion to Islam. As Muslims were facing imminent defeat, Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed, being a skilled warrior, was able to strategically confuse the enemy forces by repeatedly swapping his armies between two fronts. This created the impression that Muslims had gotten reinforcements and thus they lost the will to continue the battle. Both armies then retreated.

Khalid had fought fiercely and courageously in this battle upon which Prophet Muhammad gave him the title of the "Sword of Allah". After this battle, Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed fought many more battles and led his forces to victory.

This was the first battle (also called the Battle of Muthah) where Muslims had come face-to-face with the Byzantine super power. Although the victory for Muslims was not decisive, this experience paved their way for future expeditions and expansions.

5.7 *Conquest of Makkah*

One of the terms of the treaty of Al-Hudaibiyah was that any tribes of the Arabian Peninsula that allied themselves with either the Quraish or the Muslims in Madinah, would be covered by the terms of the treaty as well. After the treaty, one of the tribes living in Makkah, Banu Khuzaah, allied with Prophet Muhammad and their rivals Banu Bakr joined the Quraish. After two years of peace, Banu Bakr, with the help of the Quraish, attacked Banu Khuzaah, killing some of their people. When Banu Khuzaah reported the incident to Prophet Muhammad and asked for his help, the Prophet took this as a violation of the treaty and decided to march against the Quraish in Makkah in January 630 CE – 8 AH.

As Muslims had grown to be a sizable force in the Arabian Peninsula, the Quraish became concerned with the Muslims' intention to march toward Makkah. A delegation from Makkah, therefore, visited the Prophet in the hopes of warding off an invasion of Makkah. However, nothing conclusive came out of the meeting. The Prophet continued his preparation to go to Makkah. To keep his movement secret, the Prophet sent one of his companions, Abu-Qatada, in a different direction with a small force to make the Quraish spies believe that Muslims were using a different route to approach Makkah.

On his way to Makkah, Abu-Sufyan, the leader of the Quraish who had waged numerous battles against the Muslims, came to see the Prophet with the Prophet's uncle, Abbas. As they approached to see the Prophet, the Muslims wanted to kill him for the numerous times that he had killed in their ranks over the preceding years. Initially, even the Prophet did not speak to him and when he approached other companions of the Prophet, they too, avoided him. However, seeing Abu-Sufyan's changed behavior, the Prophet pardoned him and Abu-Sufyan accepted Islam. As the Prophet was approaching Makkah, he advised his companions that anyone in Makkah who takes refuge in the house of Abu-Sufyan would be granted peace.

Abbas advised Abu-Sufyan to head to Makkah and to dissuade people from engaging in any hostilities against the Muslim army. On this, he was rebuked by the people of Makkah along with his wife, Hind bint Utbah. Ikramah ibn Abu-Jahl along with his compatriots hid within Makkah with the intention to fight the Prophet.

Prophet Muhammad finally reached Makkah with his companions. This was a significant event for most of them who had been forced a few years earlier to abandon their lives and hometown in Makkah to leave for Madinah. The Prophet entered Makkah with a force of ten thousand men. This show of force greatly worried the Quraish and they feared for their lives, especially those of them who had persecuted Muslims in the past, killed many of their relatives in the first few years of Islam, and had waged many battles against them. However, the Prophet announced a few rules that many in the Quraish welcomed. As Abu-Sufyan was still the leader of the Quraish, the Prophet announced through Abu-Sufyan that whoever enters the house of Abu-Sufyan, or enters his own house and shuts the door, and whoever enters in the Kaabah and the surrounding mosque areas, will be safe.

With the exception of a small resistance in certain pockets of Makkah, most Quraish largely accepted the Muslims in Makkah and did not fight. According to historic sources, two men under Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed were killed from the Muslim side and twelve people from the Quraish died in the short battle [\[28\]](#) .

After declaring Makkah safe for Muslims, Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed entered Makkah followed by the Prophet, who circumambulated around the Kaabah. The Prophet then entered the Kaabah with Bilal and Usamah Ibn Zaid and destroyed the three-hundred-and-sixty idols that were the Kaabah. Next, he made a speech to the Quraish where he reminded them that their pride based on materialistic things of life was no longer there. He recited the following verse:

“And say: "Truth (i.e. Islamic Monotheism) has come and Batil (falsehood, i.e. Satan or polytheism, etc.) has vanished. Surely! Batil is ever bound to vanish." (Surah Al-Isra, 17:81)

He also recited the following Quranic verse:

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqlwa [i.e. piety and righteousness in their hearts]. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (Surah Al-Hujuraat, 49:13)

During the conquest of Makkah, the Prophet and the Muslims did not take any revenge. There were only four people who were arrested for certain crimes and four [\[29\]](#) people were killed. Many people who became Muslims included Abu-Sufyan, Hind (his wife), Ikramah Bin Abu-Jahl, and other prominent Quraish personalities who at one time were Islam’s archenemies.

With the conquest of Makkah in the south and conquest of Khaibar toward the north, only a few threats remained. People in the Arabian Peninsula started to embrace Islam in large numbers, and in the years that followed Islam penetrated almost all of the Arabian Peninsula.

Prophet Muhammad stayed in Makkah for a few days and then returned to Madinah. As many people had embraced Islam, the Prophet became concerned about the teaching of Islam to the new Muslims. To address that, the Prophet appointed Muadh Ibn Jabal to teach people the teachings of the Quran and Islam. Later, the Prophet also sent Muadh to Yemen to teach people the Islamic teachings. Even after the Prophet’s death, the Muslim leaders (Caliphs) that followed the Prophet continued to send Muadh on such expeditions to other regions. For example, during Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab’s time, he sent Muadh to Emesa (Homs in present-day Syria) along with two other companions of the Prophet to teach people about the Quran and Islam.

In his last sermon [\[30\]](#) he reminded people of the basics of Islam (see section 4.1). He also stressed the need to treat women fairly and to give them their full rights. He then reminded humanity that the white does not have superiority over black or vice versa and a person achieves higher status only through ‘taqlwa’ (piety). Lastly, he reminded humanity that no

prophet or messenger would come after him and stressed the need for everyone to hold fast to the message of Quran and his Sunnah (traditions).

5.8 Preparation for the Second Byzantine Empire Confrontation

After the battle of Muthah and the manner in which the small army of Muslims fended off a large Christian threat, many local Arab tribes at the border of Syria and Jordan, who earlier were under the influence and control of the Byzantine Empire, started to defect. Heraclius now started to see the Muslims of Madinah as a rising threat against his empire and he started to channel his war efforts to conquer the lands ruled by Muslims.

On the other hand, Prophet Muhammad was also not satisfied with the results of the Battle of Muthah, especially when Sharhabil, who had murdered the Prophet's messenger, had not faced justice. Besides, when Prophet Muhammad heard the news of the Byzantine Empire's intention of invading Muslim lands in the Arabian Peninsula in cooperation with the Ghassanids, he decided to launch a preemptive attack on the Byzantine armies toward the north of Madinah. Therefore, in September 630 CE (9 AH), Prophet Muhammad prepared a force of almost thirty thousand that combined forces from Madinah and other allied Arab tribes. This force proceeded to Tabuk, a city located more than five hundred kilometers north of Madinah in present-day Saudi Arabia. Tabuk, during those times, was situated at the border of the Byzantine Empire.

Since the birth of Islam, this was the largest military expedition. To finance this military contingent, the Prophet asked for contributions and donations. Many of the Prophet's prominent companions like Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, and Uthman ibn Affan contributed an enormous portion of their wealth to help prepare for the battle. This, in turn, encouraged others to do the same. While Umar Ibn Al-Khattab is known to have donated half of his belongings to the Muslim cause, Abu Bakr contributed all of his belongings. Historians note that when Abu Bakr

brought his contributions, the Prophet asked him what he had left for his family. In response, which became quite popular in Islamic history, Abu Bakr replied that he had left Allah and His Prophet for himself and his family.

This was one of the many examples of Abu Bakr's (and the Prophet's companions') generosity. Allah testified about Abu Bakr's generosity in the following Quranic verses:

- ***“And Al-Muttaqun (the pious and righteous) will be far removed from it (Hell).***
 - ***He who spends his wealth for increase in self-purification.”***
- (Surah Al-Lail (The Night), 92:17-18)***

Once the Muslims reached Tabuk, they stayed there for a few days waiting for their encounter with the Byzantine army. However, knowing that the Muslims had prepared well for the battle and had great morale under the Prophet's leadership, the Byzantine army decided not to confront the Muslims and thus they never arrived. Many people in the region negotiated peace settlements with the Prophet thus extending the Muslim rule to the edge of the Byzantine Empire. After that, the Prophet pulled back his forces.

Historians considered this military expedition as a great success as it demonstrated Muslim capability to put together a large force to face large armies of the Byzantine Empire. The Arab tribes, which earlier had shied away from being part of the Muslim forces, were now increasingly recognizing their strength in the Arabian Peninsula. Accordingly, a large number of them (including some from the Arab Christian tribes) shifted their allegiances from the Byzantine Empire to the Muslims of Madinah.

Allah revealed verses related to this battle and the hypocrites in Surah At-Tauba in the Quran.

5.9 *Death of Prophet Muhammad*

In the year 632 CE (11 AH), Prophet Muhammad became quite sick, which left him bedridden. The sickness made him weak to the extent that he was even unable to lead the prayers in the Madinah mosque. He therefore asked Abu Bakr to lead the prayers in his absence and remained in the house of his wife Aisha that was adjacent to the mosque of the Prophet.

A day before his death, he also gave away all of his belongings to charity and distributed his other valuables amongst the Muslims. On the day of his death, Prophet Muhammad looked out of the house and saw his companions getting ready to offer prayers that made him quite happy. Abu Bakr was ready to lead the prayers and on seeing the Prophet, he stepped back to let the Prophet lead the prayers. However, the Prophet signaled him to continue leading the prayers and returned to his bed as his pain and fever had increased. As was mentioned earlier, the Prophet had started to feel a certain type of sickness after he was poisoned by the Jewish lady during his trip to Khaibar. Although he had ingested a small quantity of the poison before realizing that his food was poisoned, it had slowly taken root in his body.

During the last few hours of his life, he called his daughter Fatimah and her sons Hassan Ibn Ali and Hussein Ibn Ali. While his wives and others surrounded him during his illness, he repeatedly advised Muslims to stay steadfast and regular in their prayers. He kept repeating: ***“Prayer, Prayer... your slaves and subordinates”***. He also kept instructing Muslims not to make his grave as a place of worship, the way Christians, Jews, and others had made them [\[31\]](#) .

During his last moments, his wife Aisha took the Prophet’s head between her chest and chin [\[32\]](#) . The Prophet pointed his finger towards the heaven and repeated three times:

“With those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace with the Prophets and the Truthful ones (As-Siddeeqeen), the martyrs and the good doers. O Allah, forgive me and have mercy upon me and join me to the Companionship on high. The most exalted

Companionship on high. To Allah we turn and to Him we turn back for help and last abode."

While saying the above, Prophet Muhammad then passed away. The news of his death shocked the companions and others. At the time of his death, Abu Bakr was in his home located in the outskirts of Madinah. On his arrival at the house of Aisha (his daughter and the Prophet's wife), which was near the mosque of the Prophet, there was already a gathering of Muslims in and around Masjid-e-Nabwi (the Mosque of the Prophet). He then kissed Prophet Muhammad and was the first to announce his death in front of the Prophet's companions. Umar Ibn Al-Khattab in his shock threatened to kill anyone who claimed that the Prophet had died. Sensing what might have been going through the hearts and minds of the Muslims, Abu Bakr came out of the house, stepped into the mosque and announced the death of the Prophet to the public. One of the first things that Abu Bakr reminded everyone was that the Prophet was simply a human being and he was not to be worshipped. Abu Bakr announced the Prophet's death in a long speech in which he said:

"O people, whoever worshipped Muhammad, then behold! Muhammad is indeed dead. But, whoever worships Allah (God), behold! God is alive and will never die."

Through these words, Abu Bakr wanted to remind everyone of the fundamental aspect of Islamic monotheism, which is expressed by the words of ***"La Ilaha Illa-Allah"*** meaning there is no God (worthy of worship) but Allah. He further wanted to emphasize that the Prophet was merely a human being and that Allah had created and sent him as His messenger of peace and mercy to the entire humanity. This reminder was to ensure that people stayed steadfast on the essence of Islam and did not fall into pagan worship practices of the past such as making pictures and idols of their Prophets and others and start using them for worship.

At the end of his speech, Abu Bakr also recited the following verse from the Quran:

“Muhammad is no more than a Messenger, and indeed (other) Messengers have passed away before him. If he dies or is killed, will you then turn back on your heels (as disbelievers)? And he who turns back on his heels, not the least harm will he do to Allah, and Allah will give reward to those who are grateful.” (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:144)

Allah also mentions in the Quran the following Verse:

“Say (O Muhammad): ‘I am only a man like you. It has been inspired (revealed) to me that your Ilah (God) is One Ilah (God i.e. Allah). So whoever hopes for the Meeting with his Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of his Lord.’” (Surah Al-Kahf, 18:110)

After Abu Bakr’s speech, the Muslims felt consoled and gradually started to come to accept that the Prophet had indeed left them for the hereafter.

The Prophet’s Body was then washed by his close relatives and freed slaves, including Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, Abbas, and Usamah Ibn Zaid. After his death, his body was covered in a striped Yemen garment [\[33\]](#) . He was then buried in the house of the mother of the believers, Aisha. That house was later adjoined to the mosque of the Prophet (the haram Mosque in Madinah, Saudi Arabia). After a few years, when Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar Ibn Al-Khattab died, they too were buried next to his grave.

6 The Start of the Islamic Caliphate (Khilafa Al-Rashidun)

The death of Prophet Muhammad marked a significant turning point for the new Muslim nation. Until then, the companions of the Prophet were receiving the Divine message (Quran) firsthand from the Prophet along with a detailed explanation of that message. The twenty-three years of steady revelation had helped ingrain the message of Islam and its teachings in the psyche of the companions who had lived with the Prophet during that time. The death of the Prophet then put enormous responsibility on the companions of the Prophet. They took it upon themselves to spread that message of peace to humanity at large and, above all, to ensure that the message was preserved and implemented in the same manner that the Prophet had taught to the companions themselves. Historical accounts from the life of the companions prove that the companions remained focused and serious in carrying out that responsibility.

Foreseeing this important role, the Prophet had repeatedly emphasized the special status of his companions. In that spirit, he singled out some companions more than others based on the quality of their faith, character, and leadership qualities. As the Islamic message was still new, he ensured that the next generation rallied behind his companions in understanding the message, and took them as leaders in matters of administration and religious knowledge. In an authentic hadith, the Prophet said:

“It was narrated that Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafiyyah, who was the son of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, said: ‘I asked my father (Ali Ibn Abu-Talib), Which of the people is the best after the Messenger of Allah (S)?’ He said, ‘Abu Bakr.’ I asked, ‘Then who?’ He said, ‘Umar.’ I was worried that he would say Uthman, so I said, ‘Then is it you?’ He said, ‘I am just a man among the Muslims.’” (Narrated by Bukhari, 3671).

A renowned Sunni scholar, Ibn Taymiyah, mentions in his book ‘al-Waasitiyyah’ that they (the followers of the Prophet’s Sunnah) list Uthman

as the third and Ali Ibn Abu-Talib as the fourth in that sequence.

In another hadith, Abu-Saeed al-Khudri said that *the Prophet said*:

“Do not slander my Companions, for if one of you were to spend an amount of gold equivalent to the size of Mount Uhud (a mountain in the city of Madinah), you would not even come halfway up to their level.” (Reported by Bukhari, al-Fath, No. 3379.)

The Quran mentions the following about the companions:

“And the first to embrace Islam of the Muhajirun (those who migrated from Makkah to Al-Madinah) and the Ansar (the citizens of Al-Madinah who helped and gave aid to the Muhajirun) and also those who followed them exactly (in Faith). Allah is well-pleased with them as they are well-pleased with Him. He has prepared for them Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever. That is the supreme success.” (Surah At-Taubah, 9:100)

This is one of the distinguishing points of the followers of the Prophet's traditions, or Sunnah (known as 'Sunnis'), because they take the companions of the Prophet as role models. This is contrary to some other sects (e.g. Shiites), who blame some of the prominent companions such as Abu Bakr and Umar Ibn Al-Khattab [\[34\]](#) for various reasons. In his Quranic Tafsir (interpretation), Ibn Kathir (a renowned Islamic scholar) and numerous other scholars have characterized this as a major sin.

Other than the companions, the Quran as well as the Prophet also singled out other groups, some of which are mentioned below:

1) **Mother of the Believers** – The Quran specifically designated the wives of the Prophet as the 'mothers' of the Muslims. Thus, they have a special status in Islam. Amongst his wives, the two who are mentioned widely and are well-regarded are Khadeejah (the Prophet's first wife) and Aisha (the Prophet's youngest wife and Abu Bakr's daughter).

2) **The ten companions to whom the Prophet gave glad tidings of Paradise in his lifetime** – In an authentic hadith narrated in Tirmidhi (# 3680), the Prophet gave glad tidings of paradise to the following ten individuals: (1) Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, (2) Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, (3) Uthman Ibn Affan, (4) Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, (5) Talhah, (6) Zubair Ibn Al-Awwam, (7) Abdur-Rahman Ibn Awf, (8) Saad Ibn Abi Waqas, (9) Saeed Ibn Zaid, and (10) Abu-Ubaiadh Ibn Al-Jarrah. Although the Prophet had given some others such glad tidings too, he mentioned these ten names in one hadith.

3) **Ahl-ul-Bayt (Members of the Prophet's household)** – This group comprised of the people who are in the family of the Prophet. Although scholars differ on who is included in his immediate family, the view among the scholars of Sunnah (Sunnis) is that this group includes the Prophet's wives, his children, members of the Banu Hashim and Banu Abdul-Muttalib clan, and their freed slaves [\[35\]](#) .

6.1 Selection of Abu Bakr as the First Caliph

Soon after the death of the Prophet, a group from the Ansar along with a few Muhajireen assembled in the shed of Saqifah Bani Saida [\[36\]](#) to discuss the selection of a Muslim leader. As mentioned earlier, Ansar were the natives of the city of Madinah who had originally welcomed the Prophet and the immigrants from Makkah (Muhajireen) to their city. This group of Ansar, therefore, wanted to select a caliph from their ranks. As the conversation continued, the discussion became tense between the Ansar and the Muhajireen, as each party believed it to be their right to have the leader and caliph of the Muslims selected from their group. Sensing that the discussions were getting tense, one from the group left to inform Abu Bakr, who at the time was at the Prophet's house. Fearing that the matters were going to get worse, Abu Bakr immediately left the Prophet's house to join that discussion at the shed of Saqifah Bani Saida. He took along with him Umar Ibn Al-Khattab and Abu-Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrah. Ali Ibn Abu-Talib stayed behind to handle the funeral arrangements of the Prophet.

Once the three joined the group, the meeting continued for a while without coming to any conclusion or agreement between them. Abu Bakr then stepped forward and addressed the Ansar, who were insisting that they deserved that position more than anyone else. He told them that although the Ansar (people of Madinah) had the right to ask for this honor, a candidate from the Quraish of Makkah would be better suited to take on the role of the administrator to unify the Muslims, and to have better influence on the Arabs [37]. This is because people from Makkah (especially the clans of Banu Hahsim and Banu Umayyah) had prior experience in leading various Arab groups, and thus would do better in governing the Muslims. He also reminded everyone that the Prophet had once mentioned that leadership of the Muslims would continue with those who were from the Quraish. Even some of the Ansar, who were part of the discussion, mentioned that as the Prophet was from the Quraish and as the Muhajireen had taken a lead in various administrative matters, they were more suited for the leadership role. After his speech, Abu Bakr gave the Ansar the option to choose between Umar Al-Khattab and Abu-Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrah as their caliph. Hearing this, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab immediately interjected by stating that only Abu Bakr deserved the caliphate. He reminded everyone of the numerous occasions when the Prophet had hinted of this and had selected Abu Bakr to lead the prayers (as an Imam) during the last days of the Prophet [38]. Umar then approached Abu Bakr and gave his pledge of allegiance to him.

Seeing this, the group of Muhajireen immediately agreed and followed suit and pledged their allegiance to Abu Bakr. Soon thereafter, others from the Ansar, too, followed and gave their pledge to Abu Bakr and thus, he was declared as the first leader and caliph of Muslims. Their faith in the Quranic teachings to stay united (Surah Aal-e-Imran, Verse 103) was instrumental for them to overcome their biases. The Quranic verse says:

“And hold fast, all of you together, to the Rope of Allah (i.e. this Quran), and be not divided among yourselves, and remember Allah's Favor on you, for you were enemies one to another but He joined your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren (in Islamic Faith), and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Ayat

(proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.,) clear to you, that you may be guided.” (Surah Aal-e-Imran, 3:103)

Abu Bakr’s original name was Abdullah Ibn Abu-Quhaafah. Later, he was called Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq (the truthful) as he testified to the truth of the Prophet’s prophethood without any hesitation. Besides, during his life, when the Prophet had ascended to the heavens in the event that came to be known as Al-Israa Wal Miraaj (The Night Journey and Ascension (to the heavens)), Abu Bakr was the first to testify without any hesitation. He, therefore, was given the name “As-Siddeeq”, meaning “the truthful”.

After his selection, Caliph Abu Bakr delivered a speech to the Muslims at large. In it, he demanded obedience only when he commanded and legislated based on Allah’s message in the Quran and the message of His Prophet (hadith).

Initially, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib (the Prophet’s cousin and his son-in-law) and some of his relatives did not offer their pledge of allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr. This raised a few concerns among the Muslims as no one wanted to see the Muslims split on the issue of leadership. Also, the fact that Ali was from the Ahl-ul-Bayt and had a respected status, caused further discomfort amongst some of the Muslims. According to Hadith Bukhari (3998) and Hadith Muslim (1759), Aisha (mother of the believers and wife of the Prophet) narrated that her father, Abu Bakr, met Ali Ibn Abu-Talib after he sent a message to meet with him. In that meeting, Ali gave his pledge to Abu Bakr as the caliph of the Muslims. Ali also made it clear that he had withheld his pledge for a few months not due to any jealousy for Abu Bakr, but because he was upset for not being consulted on the important matter of selecting a caliph of the Muslims even though he (Ali) had a close kinship with the Prophet and Messenger of Allah [\[39\]](#) . After Ali’s pledge, the Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula became quite pleased as they all united under the leadership of Caliph Abu Bakr [\[40\]](#) .

Islamic history cites numerous incidents proven by authenticated ahadith, which indicate that although the Prophet did not specifically mention Abu Bakr to become the leader of the Muslims, he had provided numerous hints

to that effect. For example, Abu Bakr was Prophet's best friend, the first to accept Islam and believe in the Prophet and the message of Islam, accompanied him during migration (hijrah), a loyal companion, and his father-in-law. He was also a source of great strength for Prophet Muhammad, especially in the early days of Islam when almost everyone in Makkah persecuted the Prophet and those who initially believed in his message. Furthermore, throughout his life, the Prophet praised the services of Abu Bakr that he had rendered for Islam.

Amr Ibn Al-Aas narrated that he once asked the Prophet: *"Which of the people is dearest to you?"* He said, *"Aisha."* I said, *"Who among men?"* He said, *"Her father (Abu Bakr)."* I said, *"Then who?"* He said, *"Then Umar Ibn al-Khattab,"* and he mentioned some other men." (Narrated by Bukhari, 3662; Muslim, 2384)

In another hadith, the Prophet said to Hudhaifah (one of his companions) to stick with Abu Bakr and Umar after his death [\[41\]](#) . Jubair Ibn Mutim mentioned another incident in which a woman came to the Prophet to seek advice on a matter but he asked her to return later. When she asked him what if he was not there, he asked her to go and see Abu Bakr [\[42\]](#) .

Abu Bakr took the reign of the caliphate in 632 CE (11 AH). Being the first caliph of Muslims, Abu Bakr realized the importance of his position. More than establishing the various administration rules to govern the new areas that were gradually coming under Muslim rule, he remained focused to preserve the message of Islam and continued spreading that message as Prophet Muhammad had started in his lifetime.

After the death of the Prophet and becoming a caliph, Abu Bakr faced three primary challenges. The first was from some tribes who had revolted because they no longer sensed the needed to follow a central command of a caliph based in Madinah. The second challenge was from those who had claimed false prophethood. Finally, his third challenge came from the neighboring Sassanid and Byzantine (Roman) Empires, which were getting ready to take over the cities in the Arabian Peninsula.

First Army Expedition to the Byzantine Empire

Before his death, Prophet Muhammad was in the process of assembling an army of three thousand men under the command of 18-year-old Usamah Ibn Zaid (son of Zaid Ibn Haritha, who earlier had died in the Battle of Muthah). When Prophet Muhammad died, the army was ready to leave to counter the threat of the Byzantine Empire, which was under the leadership of Emperor Heraclius. After the death of the Prophet, some of the Prophet's companions advised Caliph Abu Bakr to cancel the expedition to keep the army within Madinah to counter the internal issues and threats that had started to surface. However, as Abu Bakr did not want to stop something that Prophet Muhammad had initiated, and as the Byzantines were threatening to invade the Muslim lands, he refused to stop the battle plans. As part of this battle, his goal was to send a message to the Byzantines that the Muslims as a force had not diminished with the death of the Prophet and to deter them from making any invasion plans in the future.

Before letting Usamah continue on the battle, he stipulated certain rules of war, which later became the guidelines for future battles and expeditions. Amongst the rules that he decreed [\[43\]](#) included prohibition of the killing of the old, women, and children, and prohibition of engaging in treachery, deception, mutilation, and cutting down of trees. Animals used for prey and eating, too, were not to be killed unless they needed to be eaten. He also prohibited Usamah from fighting the Jews and Christians (people of the book) who took refuge in their places of worship.

Usamah took his forces to the battlefield and was able to inflict heavy losses on the Byzantines. He returned with an enormous amount of war booty that was then deposited in the Bait-ul-Maal (state's treasury). This was an important victory for the Muslims over an empire that was one of the world's superpowers at the time. Additionally, the Byzantine's defeat also strengthened the Muslim position within the Arabian Peninsula.

6.2 Wars against the Rebellious Tribes

In general, the tribes in the Arabian Peninsula were not used to following a central command of government that lay outside their immediate tribal

jurisdictions. Although during the Prophet's time they had accepted him as their leader, they decided to rebel from that central control after the Prophet's death. Furthermore, the fact that they had to pay an annual Zakat (a type of a charity tax collected to disburse to the poor and needy) to the central caliphate government gave them another reason to revolt. In pre-Islamic Arabia, as it was not unusual for the tribes to break their alliances after the death of their leader, many refused to submit to the authority of Caliph Abu Bakr claiming that their allegiance was only to Prophet Muhammad and not to any 'Muslim state'. As this was contrary to the message of the Prophet, Caliph Abu Bakr and his companions considered this as an act of revolt and mutiny against the unity of Muslims.

The caliph, therefore, decided to go to war against these tribes. Initially, even Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, who was known to be strict in enforcing such principles, tried to stop him from waging this war. However, Caliph Abu Bakr was determined to maintain the unity of Muslims and to maintain the law and order of the central government led by the caliph. Since Abu Bakr had a reputation to be softhearted, his stance on this issue surprised many of the Prophet's companions. Islamic history, therefore, notes that although Caliph Abu Bakr continued to live his simple lifestyle, he took a tough stance in enforcing the Islamic law and order within the areas under his control.

With some tribes rebelling from the central control, the situation had become even more volatile in other regions of the Arabian Peninsula where some tribal leaders started to make fake claims of prophethood. As people had seen Prophet Muhammad's success in attracting a large following, these fake prophets had started to wish for such a following as well.

To put down these various types of rebellions, Caliph Abu Bakr formed eleven army units under different commanders. These commanders included Ikrimah Ibn Abu-Hisham (earlier known as Ikramah Ibn Abu-Jahal, who was the son of the Prophet's enemy, Abu-Jahal), Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed (the Quraish commander that fought against the Muslims in the battle of Uhud, but later became a Muslim), and Amr Ibn Al-Aas (the commander that earlier fought against the Muslims and later became the ruler of Egypt).

The largest army was under the command of Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed who was tasked to first defeat two apostates, Tulaihah Ibn Khuwailid and Malik Ibn Nuwairah. Ikrimah was sent to fight another rebel named Musailamah. The rest of the commanders were sent to put down the other rebellions that occurred in the South and the East (in present-day Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Bahrain, Oman, and other regions).

In history, these wars came to be known as the Ridda Wars (Wars of Apostasy). Even though the purpose of these military campaigns was to crush the uprising of these rebellious tribes, Caliph Abu Bakr sent letters through his emissaries giving them the opportunity to avoid confrontation. He even instructed his forces to avoid the fight and to give the rebels the opportunity to surrender and accept the rule of the prevailing law to which they had earlier pledged their allegiance. Only if they refused and attacked the Muslims was the Caliph's army to engage them in a battle.

The closest threat to the city of Madinah was from Malik Ibn Nuwairah, who had claimed false prophethood and was in the west of Madinah. Once Malik was captured, a conflict arose between Khalid's forces because some attested that Malik's forces had declared peace by saying Adhan (call to prayers), which was the custom for declaring surrender and peace. The point of contention was the time and the conditions under which Nuwairah's forces had called the Adhan. According to the laws of the battle stipulated by Caliph Abu Bakr, this could have meant applying different rules in the treatment of Nuwairah (captured in a state of war, or while proclaiming peace). Khalid was of the opinion that Nuwairah was captured in a state of fighting and thus deserved to be killed. When the Muslim soldiers brought Malik to Khalid, during their conversations Malik did not appear to address the Prophet respectfully. At this, Khalid became furious, and in his rage he signaled to one of his soldiers who killed Malik. On learning this, Abu-Qatada, a companion of the Prophet and one who was not in favor of killing Nuwairah, became angry with Khalid and returned to Madinah to lodge a complaint against him and what he thought was an unjust murder. Even Umar Ibn Al-Khattab wanted the caliph to punish Khalid as he thought that the killing was not justified. However, after an investigation, Caliph Abu Bakr acquitted Khalid of these charges. Abu-

Qatada was reprimanded for having left his leader's (Khalid's) forces without his permission. He was ordered to return and report to Khalid.

After defeating Nuwairah, Muslim armies proceeded to engage the powerful tribe of Banu Hanifa, which was led by Musailamah Kadhdhab (the liar).

Battle of Yamama

One of the bloodiest battles that Caliph Abu Bakr's forces fought against the false prophets was the battle of Yamama, in which he fought Musailamah Al-Kadhdhab (Musailamah the Liar). Yamama is located in an area near present-day Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Musailamah, from the Banu Hanifa tribe, had declared himself as a false Prophet in Prophet Muhammad's time. By the time Abu Bakr had become the caliph, Musailamah had attracted a large following. Historians say that although many in his tribe recognized him as a liar and believed in Prophet Muhammad as the true Prophet, they would say that a false Prophet from their tribe was better than a true Prophet who belonged to another tribe.

Caliph Abu Bakr initially sent Ikramah Ibn Abi Hisham (earlier known as Ikramah Ibn Abu-Jahl) to lead the forces to the gates of Banu Hanifa. He had been asked not to engage in any battles with Musailamah until additional reinforcements could join him. However, Ikramah was impatient and he decided to attack Banu Hanifa at Yamama. Musailamah's forces successfully repulsed the attack and as a result, many of the Prophet's companions died in that battle and Ikramah lost the battle. Caliph Abu Bakr was deeply saddened and angered by the Muslim loss.

Later, after Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed had completed his mission in putting down the rebellions of Tulaihah and Nuwaira, the caliph asked him to go and lead the military mission of Banu Hanifa. By the time Khalid arrived and joined the battle, Banu Hanifa had already repelled a few of the Muslims' attacks. These smaller victories over the Muslim armies had encouraged the followers of Musailamah and made them a tougher enemy as well as more loyal to their false prophet.

Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed then led an attack but that, too, was repelled by the forces of Musailamah. The battle then raged on and resulted in many deaths on both sides. On the account of those who participated in this battle and as reported by historians, the heavy losses on both sides caused blood flowing like a stream.

During the last phase of the battle, as Muslim attacks intensified, the many thousands of the remaining Musailamah's soldiers enclosed themselves in a walled garden. Once again, in an effort to open the gates, both forces incurred heavy losses, which led to the garden being referred to as the "Garden of Death". Finally, a soldier from Khalid's forces managed to jump over the wall of the garden and played a major role in opening the gate of the garden and letting the Muslim army in the garden. Once in, Khalid's forces were able to overpower Musailamah's forces with ease. Then, Wahshi Ibn Harb, a soldier in Khalid's forces, was able to get close to Musailamah and kill him. That led to the Muslims becoming victorious over Musailamah and put down the rebellion. Wahshi was the same African slave who was a non-believer during the Battle of Uhud and whom Hind (wife of Abu-Sufyan) had hired in that battle to kill Humza Ibn Abdul-Muttalib (the Prophet's uncle).

The Battle of Yamama was the toughest and bloodiest battle fought by the armies of Caliph Abu Bakr amongst the many to put down the various rebellions. After the victory in Yamama, the rebellion of tribes within the Arabian Peninsula ended and so did the Ridda Wars. Within a year of his caliphate rule, Abu Bakr was able to crush all major threats posed by the false prophets and rebellious tribes. At the end of the Ridda Wars, the entire Arabian Peninsula came under the command of the Muslim caliph and the central government of Madinah. All the tribes united under the banner of Caliph Abu Bakr's caliphate and peace was restored across all of the Arabian Peninsula.

6.3 First Complete Compilation of the Quran

During his time, the Prophet put a lot of emphasis on memorizing the Quran rather than writing the revelation. Later, he asked some of his companions to write the Quran as well. These companions included Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn al-Aas, Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan (son of Abu-Sufyan and Hind, who earlier were archenemies of the Prophet but later became Muslims), Zaid Ibn Thaabit [\[44\]](#) , and others.

When the Prophet died, the Quran did not exist as one compilation. Instead, it was written on animal skins, stones, and other items. Prophet Muhammad's companions had memorized it not just to seek spiritual rewards, but also to teach it to others. When several of those companions died in the Ridda wars, especially in the battle of Yamama, it was felt that a written and compiled version of the Quran was essential to preserve the divine message for future generations. Initially, Caliph Abu Bakr was reluctant to do so as this was something that the Prophet had not done in his lifetime and thus he feared innovations in religious matters. However, after the insistence of Umar and other companions of the Prophet, the caliph agreed to the idea.

For this task, Caliph Abu Bakr chose Zaid Ibn Thaabit and gave him the responsibility to compile the Quran from various authentic sources into a single compilation. Initially, Zaid resisted as well for the same reasons mentioned before. However, on the insistence of Caliph Abu Bakr and Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, Zaid started compiling the Quran. Although he knew the Quran by heart, he validated each verse by consulting a minimum of two of the Prophet's other companions before writing each verse. This led to the first written compilation of the Quran, which had been authenticated through various sources.

Even though Uthman Ibn Affan, the third Caliph, was credited for publishing the Quran in book form, it was Caliph Abu Bakr who led the charge in compiling the first re-verified and authentic text of the Quran in written form. This written copy stayed with Caliph Abu Bakr while he was the caliph and then later passed on to Caliph Umar. After Caliph Umar's death, the written copy went to Hafsa bint Umar (Caliph Umar's daughter) [\[45\]](#) . Later, it was passed on to Uthman when he became the caliph. The

manuscript was the source of the other copies made by Uthman eighteen years after the death of the Prophet.

6.4 Military Campaigns against Sassanid (Persian) Empire

Once peace was restored within the boundaries of the Islamic caliphate in 633 CE, Caliph Abu Bakr set his vision to restore peace on the borders of the Muslim caliphate that were threatened by the forces of the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires. The areas that bordered the caliphate in the northwest included the lands in present-day Syria that were ruled by the Byzantine Empire, while the areas in the east and northeast included the lands in present-day Iraq, which were ruled by the Sassanid Empire.

To restore peace within the Muslim borders and to remove the threat posed by those empires, Caliph Abu Bakr decided to strike those forces preemptively in an effort to push the forces of those empires well into their territories. Even when it looked merely impossible for the newly established state, Caliph Abu Bakr decided to initiate simultaneous military campaigns against both super powers at its borders.

According to historians, Abu Bakr wanted to achieve three goals with his military campaigns directed towards the Sassanid and Byzantine (Roman) Empires.

1. **Protection of the Muslim Caliphate:** Abu Bakr wanted to ensure that the borders within the caliphate remained safe. Romans were a threat on the north of the border while Persians were ready to wage war on the eastern ends of the border. To counter the threat from the two super powers of that time, Caliph Abu Bakr wanted to push them back.
2. **Propagation of Islam:** At the borders of the Roman and Persian empires there were numerous Arab tribes living a nomadic life without any proper religion. Abu Bakr wanted to propagate Islam to them and wanted to bring the nomadic tribes under the Muslim state.

3. **More influence of the Muslims:** The population living under the Roman and Persian rules were not generally happy with the high taxes and the treatment of their soldiers. This seemed like a good opportunity to bring the rule of the caliphate to those areas.

One of the initial battles took place at Mesopotamia (now Iraq) when a few tribes turned hostile to Muslims in the areas of Bahrain and Qateef (present-day Eastern Saudi Arabia). The Banu Sheeban tribe earlier had ruled these areas and had a pact with the Persians in the east. During the Prophet's time, when the message of Islam was sent to various regions, the intellectuals of this tribe welcomed the message and became Muslims. Mathana Ibn Haritha was one of their tribal leaders. Once the Persian traitors in their areas threatened them, Mathana asked Caliph Abu Bakr's permission to launch preemptive strikes to secure his areas. The caliph agreed and Mathana launched numerous attacks on the Persians in the areas of Iraq and was quite successful. After learning of Mathana's successes, the caliph appointed him as the regional commander. With more soldiers and greater authority, Mathana began raids deeper into the Persian Sassanid Empire (deeper into present-day Iraq). The Persian Empire's failure to deal with the light cavalry led by Mathana made Caliph Abu Bakr think about further expanding into the borders of Iraq, which was ruled by the Persians of the Sassanid Empire.

After a few successful raids, Caliph Abu Bakr decided on a larger invasion with a proper military force. For that, he again chose Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed, who by this time had become a seasoned war veteran and had proven his successes on numerous fronts. As Khalid had just finished with the Ridda Wars and was present at Yamama (where he had defeated Musailamah's forces in the Yamama war), Caliph Abu Bakr called upon him to lead a force into the Persian Empire and invade Al-Hirah, a city that is located a few kilometers south of Baghdad. He also directed Mathana to combine his forces (and others) under the command of Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed. As Khalid's combined forces marched towards the Persian Sassanid Empire, the strength of his forces reached around eighteen thousand soldiers.

Khalid was a great success in Persia and he won many battles within the Sassanid borders. He fought his first battle there in April 633 that was called the Dhat-us-Salasil or the Battle of Chains. The battle was fought at

the place called Kazima (present-day Kuwait). At the start of the battle, Khalid invited the Persian commander Hormozd (Hurmuz) for a one-on-one duel in which Hormozd was killed. After that, a fierce battle broke out, which the Persians then lost.

The Muslim army was mobile due to its light cavalry and that made it easier for them to move fast. During the war, the soldiers of the Sassanid army chained themselves to each other in a show of strength to send a message that they would win or die. This is why the battle is called the Battle of Chains. Other historians claimed that they wore chains so that the Muslim cavalry could not pass through them. The move backfired as the Muslim cavalry not only penetrated through, but the Muslim army killed thousands of its soldiers as they were unable to retreat.

After this win, Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed and his forces fought many more battles in Iraq, and by the end of 633 CE many cities in Iraq had become part of the Muslim state. In every battle that was fought with the Sassanid armies, although the Muslim armies were outnumbered, they were able to secure many victories in Iraq. These wins included capturing the areas of Erbil, Anbar, Ain ut Tamr, and Daumat Al-Jandal. Some of these battles were also against Arab Christians who lived in those areas under the Sassanid Empire. For example, the ruler for Ain ut Tamr was Nusair, who later converted to Islam. His son, Musa Ibn Nusair, then conquered Spain a few years later under the leadership of Tariq Ibn Ziyad.

The military campaign against the Sassanid Empire was a great success and it achieved what Caliph Abu Bakr initially planned. His forces were able to push the Sassanid forces deeper into their territories and a number of cities in Iraq came under the Muslim caliphate rule.

6.5 Military Campaign against the Roman Byzantine Empire

After the success of the military campaign against the Sassanid Empire, Caliph Abu Bakr decided to launch a similar campaign against the larger

threat of the Roman Byzantine Empire in the northwest of the Arabian Peninsula. At that time, Syria was a province of the Byzantine Empire and bordered the Muslim state. Fearing another attack by the Romans, Caliph Abu Bakr decided to preemptively invade areas under the Byzantine Empire.

To push the Romans out of Syria, Caliph Abu Bakr initially sent four large army contingents to Syria and the various areas of the Levant [\[46\]](#) , with each having a different mission. The four groups and their missions were as follows:

1. Amr Ibn Al-Aas was assigned to take his forces into Palestine.
2. Yazeed Ibn Abu-Sufyan (One of Abu-Sufyan's son) was assigned to proceed to Damascus in present-day Syria [\[47\]](#) .
3. Shurabhil Ibn Hassana was sent to make an incursion into Jordan.
4. Abu-Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrah took his forces to Emesa (present-day Homs, Syria that is located approximately 150 km north of Damascus). He also acted as the overall commander over the four groups. As mentioned earlier, Abu-Ubaidah was one of the two people whom Caliph Abu Bakr had initially nominated to be the caliph after the Prophet's death.

As always, Abu Bakr gave specific guidance to the military commanders. He instructed them to exercise only enough force to subdue the enemy, to treat the soldiers with respect and dignity, and to be just in their affairs; not to turn back on the enemy, to avoid the killing of women, the weak, and children, and not to kill animals unless for a specific purpose such as eating.

As the Muslim armies approached Syria and learned more about the local situation and terrain, they discovered that the number of Byzantine forces had reached more than two hundred thousand. The Muslim forces, by contrast, were few in number and they had never confronted such large forces. The Muslim commanders, therefore, stalled and wrote to the caliph about the situation. On receiving the letter, Caliph Abu Bakr decided to send Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed to lead the front in Syria as he had previous experience of fighting larger armies in Iraq. He also advised them to face Heraclius' forces jointly rather than approach him from four fronts as was planned earlier.

Khalid in Syria against the Byzantine Empire

After receiving the new orders from the caliph, Khalid left for Syria with ten thousand of his men and left the other half in Al-Hirah, where he had earlier taken over the town. As the Muslim armies in Syria were in need of urgent help, Khalid avoided the conventional route of Dumat-ul-Jandal (in northeast Saudi Arabia), which would have taken his forces many weeks longer to reach Syria. Instead, he decided to cross the Syrian Desert, which during those times was considered an impossible feat for any one, let alone an army. Khalid and his army took great pains in crossing that desert but eventually succeeded in doing so and reached Syria. As he crossed the Syrian Desert in June 634 CE, within a few days the combined Muslim army under the command of Khalid won battles at Sawa, Arak and Tadmur, and all these Syrian cities became part of the Muslim state. After the Battle of Qaryatayn, which was fought against the combined army of the Byzantines and their local Arab allies, Khalid also captured Sukhnah, Hawarin and al-Qaryatayn. Most of these cities are located in eastern Syria at the edge of the Syrian Desert.

By this time, news of Khalid's war heroics had become well known throughout the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires. With his sudden advancement into the Syrian battlefield after crossing the Syrian Desert, the Byzantine army lost their morale and were losing various battles. Next, Khalid defeated the army of the Christian Arab allies (also called the Ghassanid Arabs) of the Byzantines in the Battle of Marj-al-Rahit, which was a city on the way to Damascus and the capital of the Christian Arab tribes. Khalid's victory in this battle effectively put an end to the Ghassanid Dynasty. Furthermore, Ghassanids no longer had the same level of support from the Byzantines as they were engaged in their own battles with the advancing Muslims. The largest battle in Syria during the rule of Caliph Abu Bakr was the Battle of Ajnadayn, which was fought in July/August 634 CE at a location near Tel Aviv, Israel. The Byzantine army was led by King Heraclius's brother, Theodore. There, too, the Byzantine army outnumbered the Muslim army, but under the command of Khalid, the larger enemy of the Byzantine army suffered heavy losses while the remaining army

retreated to Damascus. Even though the battle was a great success, the Muslims also endured losses and many of the companions of Prophet Muhammad died in this battle.

6.6 Death of Abu Bakr

Caliph Abu Bakr fell sick in 634 CE (13 AH) with severe fever. Due to his old age, all efforts to bring down his fever failed. When he suspected that he was living his last days, he became concerned about his succession. He was well aware of some of the challenges that Muslims faced after the death of the Prophet. He, therefore, held meetings with some of the prominent companions of the Prophet. These included Abdur-Rahman Ibn Awf, Talha Ibn Ubaid-Allah, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, and Uthman Ibn Affan. After mutual consultations, he nominated Umar Ibn Al-Khattab as his successor. Although most of the Prophet's companions agreed on Umar's appointment, some raised concerns about Umar's tough nature and temperament. However, Abu Bakr insisted that once Umar would have the responsibilities, his God-fearing nature would temper his outward behavior.

After the companions finalized the decision amongst themselves, Caliph Abu Bakr asked Uthman Ibn Affan to write his last testament about the appointment of Umar as the next caliph. This was then read to the public. As he was sick, Caliph Abu Bakr addressed the large gathering of Muslims who had gathered in front of his house from his roof, supported by two men. After informing them that he was not appointing any of his relatives or kin to the position but rather the most capable person, everyone in the gathering approved of the decision. Next, he called Umar to his bedside and advised him before the large gathering of the Muslims to conduct the affairs according to the Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah and to be just to all under his rule.

The dying Caliph then raised his hands and prayed to Allah that he had taken the decision to appoint someone in his lifetime to ensure unity amongst Muslims. After this, Caliph Abu Bakr remained sick for two weeks after which he passed away. At the time of his death, he was sixty-three

years old, which was almost the same age as that of the Prophet at the time of his death. He was buried at the side of Prophet Muhammad in the Madinah Mosque [\[48\]](#) .

7 The Caliphate of Umar Ibn Al-Khattab

In 634 CE (13 AH), Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab became the second caliph of the Muslims with the caliphate headquarters in Madinah. Islamic history regards Caliph Umar as one of the most prominent companions of the Prophet after Caliph Abu Bakr as has been indicated in the numerous narrations of the Prophet. He was also considered as one of the most courageous of the Prophet's companions even before his acceptance of Islam. The Quraish recognized him for his valor and skills such as horsemanship, archery, and others. The companions of the Prophet used to say that before Umar they used to worship Allah in secret but once Umar came in the fold of Islam, they started to follow Islam in public. The non-believers of Quraish considered Umar's conversion to Islam as a great setback to their causes because before accepting Islam, Umar was one of those who had wanted to eradicate Islam and the Muslims and wanted to kill the Prophet.

Umar was known to be one of the most learned and knowledgeable people in Makkah and Madinah. One of the hadiths mentions that the Prophet attested to the high knowledge of Caliph Umar, whereas in another hadith, the Prophet attested to his religious commitment [\[49\]](#) . The companions of the Prophet used to say that they always considered Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman higher than the other companions (in knowledge, religious commitment, and leadership) did [\[50\]](#) . When discussing the merits of pious people, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib always used to mention the name of Umar and instructed others on doing the same.

As a caliph, he was known to be a tough administrator. He ruled for ten years and Islam spread the most during his reign. Under his command, Muslim territories spread throughout Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and the Persian Empire. With such a large territory under his rule, he is also credited to have established formal governance methods to govern his people.

He was known to be one of the most just rulers. Historians cite numerous examples of his justice and humility. He never distinguished between Muslims, Christians, Jews, or others when deciding between their matters. As a result, the stories of his justice took hold in the far off lands. Once, at the height of his rule when he ruled over a large territory, a ruler with his delegation came to see Umar in Madinah, the capital of the Muslim territories. When they asked to meet the leader of the Muslims, he was taken to a tree in the middle of the city where Umar was resting under it with his head resting on a makeshift pillow of collected pebbles. This shocked the delegation as, in those days, the grandeur stories of the palaces of the Byzantine and Sassanid Emperors were the talk of all towns. Seeing this in a leader whose armies had captured enormous Byzantine and Sassanid territories was something they could not fathom. When they queried him about sleeping in the open with no security, he responded by saying that his justice enabled him to live and roam in peace.

Among other caliphs of the Rashidun Caliphate, Sunni Muslims have high regard and respect for both Caliph Abu Bakr and Caliph Umar. However, as will be explained later, Shiite Muslims hold differing views about these two caliphs and blame both for usurping the caliphate from Ali Ibn Abu-Talib.

7.1 The Conquest of Syria

During the era of Caliph Abu Bakr, although the Muslim forces had captured a few areas in present-day Iraq (under the Sassanid Empire) and Syria (under the Byzantine Empire), they had not engaged in any battles for larger cities. For example, areas initially captured (in present-day Syria) included cities that were on the edge of the Syrian Desert. Larger cities such as Damascus were still under the Byzantine Empire. When Umar became

the caliph, the Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius, tried to recapture the areas that he had lost under Caliph Abu Bakr. To defend that captured territory, Caliph Umar launched counter offensives to defend those areas along with capturing others as well in western Syria. To do so, he relied on the same four generals that were already present in Syria when Caliph Abu Bakr passed away. As mentioned earlier, the five generals in Syria were Amr Ibn Al-Aas, Yazeed Ibn Abu-Sufyan (Abu-Sufyan's son and Muawiyah's brother), Shurabhil Ibn Hassana, Khalid Ibn Waleed, and Abu-Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrah, who later became the supreme commander in Syria.

An important point to note is that until this time, the Byzantine and the Sassanid Empires were each other's enemies and had engaged in numerous battles to wrestle territories from each other. However, as they started to lose territory to the Muslim forces (both in Iraq and Syria), both Emperor Heraclius of the Byzantine Empire and King Yazdegerd III of the Sassanid Empire allied themselves to defeat the Muslims. In the spirit to strengthen the alliance even more, Heraclius married his granddaughter to Yazdegerd III.

With a new coalition, Heraclius then engaged Muslims in Syria in the Battle of Yarmouk. A few months later, Yazdegerd III engaged Muslims in the Battle of Al-Qadisiyah in Iraq.

The Battle of Yarmouk

The Battle of Yarmouk was one of the major strategic battles in Syria. This battle helped the Muslims weaken the Byzantine Empire, which Heraclius ruled from 610 CE to 641 CE. The two forces fought this battle at a location north of the Yarmouk River in an area that is situated southwest of Damascus and forty kilometers east of the Sea of Galilee (located in present-day Israel).

In one of the earlier battles, Khalid and his Muslim forces had captured Emesa (present-day Homs, Syria. It lies between the two cities of Damascus in the south, and Aleppo in the north.) After the siege and victory of Emesa, Emperor Heraclius resorted to a different strategy. As the Muslim armies had become known to gain an upper hand where they fought as a united

front, Heraclius planned to force the Muslim armies to split on five fronts and then intended to launch surgical strikes on those fronts from his base at Antioch (northwest Syria, near present-day Antakya, Turkey).

Khalid learned of Emperor Heraclius' strategy from some of his prisoners that he had captured in the earlier battles in Syria. In line with the instructions received from the caliph, Khalid devised a counter strategy and suggested that all Muslim armies gather in one place to face the Romans as a unified front. Abu-Ubaidah called all the armies to first gather in Jabiya (western suburbs of Damascus). However, with the pro-Byzantine forces constantly attacking them, they led their forces to the bank of the Yarmouk River to gain strategic access to the pastures and water. This strategy was a great blow to Heraclius as he was avoiding this head-on battle in one location. However, as that plan fell apart, he had no choice but to directly confront the Muslim army at Yarmouk.

The battle lasted for six days and both Islamic and Western histories attest to the Muslims' decisive victory [\[51\]](#) . This defeat left the Byzantine Empire to pull away from many areas in Syria and left them vulnerable to further Muslim conquests.

Caliph Umar Demotes Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed

Of the many prominent incidents in Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab's time, one of them was his removal of Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed as the supreme commander and general of the Muslim army. Khalid was one of those commanders who was known not to have lost any battle or war, whether as a Muslim or non-Muslim. During his life, he participated in numerous battles that started when he fought for the Quraish in Makkah and later became part of the Muslim army that fought the Byzantine Empire and the Sassanid Empire that ruled Persia. As was mentioned earlier, Khalid's military strategy, as well as his tactics when he fought as a non-Muslim, had led to the defeat of the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud as well.

Then, during one of the military expeditions, a famous poet named Ashath Ibn Qais wrote a poem praising Khalid, who was famous among the Muslim soldiers as a conqueror and a great general. Khalid paid Ashath

10,000 dirhams for the poem. When Caliph Umar found out, he ordered an inquiry to try Khalid on this charge and called him to Madinah. After investigations, Caliph Umar removed Khalid from the position of the commander of the army because, in his view, a true Muslim (and especially a leader) should not indulge in such practices, as they tend to distract him from his mission and weaken his resolve. In any event, he was relieved from his position as general and made a deputy under Abu-Ubaidah.

It should be noted that Khalid was a close relative of Umar and shared a close resemblance with him as well. Responding to peoples' concerns about the removal of Khalid, Caliph Umar responded that he had dismissed Khalid primarily because people had started to glorify him and according to the Quran only Allah should be glorified and provide victory. Fearing that Khalid and people would start associating his victories only to Khalid's performance, he demoted Khalid. It should be noted that Khalid continued to fight in the Islamic army until the end and historians have noted stories of his valor even in the battles where he fought as a soldier until the end.

Conquest of Damascus

After the series of victories in Syria, Muslim forces decided to capture Damascus and marched towards the city in 634 CE. Damascus was then under the rule of Heraclius's son-in-law, Thomas. In order to stop the advancement, the Romans sent armies towards Khalid, but were defeated at the Battle of Yaqusa and the Battle of Maraj as Saffer. From there, Khalid marched toward Damascus and surrounded the city. Heraclius sent reinforcements but the Muslim armies intercepted them before they could reach the city and were defeated in the Battle of Sanita-ul-Uqab.

After Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed was deposed as the supreme commander, he was placed under Abu-Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrah's overall command. By this time, Heraclius had reassembled his forces and refortified the city of Damascus. The Byzantines, led by Heraclius, decided not to fight the Muslim armies in the open and decided instead to fight behind the fortifications of Damascus city. This allowed them to throw stones using large catapults and arrows at the Muslim armies. This siege by the Muslim

armies of the city of Damascus continued for a period of six months. At this time, the Muslim forces changed strategy and positioned to attack the city from two fronts. Khalid had approached the city from one of the western gates while Abu-Ubaidah was still attacking the city from the east. Both commanders finally met in the middle of the city. A peace agreement was signed for the takeover of the city. Yazid Ibn Abu Sufyan was appointed as the governor.

More Battles in Syria

Although the conquest of Damascus was a big prize for the Muslim armies, other areas remained in Syria that were under the Byzantine control. As a result, more battles were fought to capture other areas that included Fihl, Baisan, Habil, Beirut (in present-day Lebanon), and Saida. As Yazeed Ibn Sufyan was the governor of Damascus, he asked his brother Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan to push with his forces to Irqah, which Muawiyah was able to do with relative ease. This allowed the Muslim army to ultimately get their hold on most of the territories that are in present-day Syria and Jordan.

Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed and Abu-Ubaidah continued their march in Syria toward other cities and were able to take over cities of Homs, Aleppo, Hama, Antakiyah, and others, thus consolidating their rule over Syria. Another battle was fought near Beit Guvrin in present-day Israel (near Bayt Jibrin in Palestine), which again fell to the Muslims under Amr Ibn Al-Aas' control.

As Caliph Umar did not favor capture of land for show of power alone or in the name of the Muslim reign, the Byzantines, therefore, continued to reign over territories under their control until the 15th century, when the empire finally fell to the Ottoman Empire. It was after the Ottoman rule that Islam became the dominant religion of the Levant.

After Yazid Ibn Abu Sufyan in a plague, his brother Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan was appointed as the governor. Muawiyah was the son of Abu-Sufyan and Hind bint Utbah. Muawiyah's sister was Umm Habeebah (Ramla Bint Abu Sufyan), who was one of the Prophet's wives and the mother of the believers. As was mentioned earlier, Abu-Sufyan was the

leader of the Quraish who had waged many battles against the Prophet (including those at Badr, Uhud, and Khandaq) until he and his wife, Hind, converted to Islam during the Conquest of Makkah. It was at that time that Abu-Sufyan had requested the Prophet to make Muawiyah a scribe for the revelations that the Prophet got from the heavens through Angel Gabriel (Jibraeel). According to Imam Ahmad, the Prophet trusted Muawiyah and on certain occasions had made special prayers for him.

7.2 The Conquest of Iraq

As mentioned earlier, the Persian front for battles and invasions had already opened up starting from Caliph Abu Bakr's time. Since then, a number of battles were taking place between the Muslims and the Sassanid Empire's Persian forces. In one of the battles, the Muslim armies, under the leadership of Abu-Ubaid Ibn Masood, fought a fierce battle near the Euphrates River. In this battle, the Persians had brought in many elephants. As the Muslims were losing that battle, Abu-Ubaid ordered his men to cut the trunks of the elephants. As a result, the elephants became restless and their Persian riders could not ride them and were killed in the mayhem. However, the Muslim army, too, lost men, including a number of their leaders, including Abu-Ubaid himself. The battle concluded with the Persians gaining victory over the Muslims.

Following this battle, Caliph Umar prepared another large army under the leadership of Mathana Ibn Haritha. As mentioned earlier, he had been fighting the Persians since Caliph Abu Bakr's time and first led smaller forces himself and then came under the forces of Khalid Ibn Waleed. The Persians brought their elephants once again and faced the Muslims at Buwaib. However, as Muslims were well prepared this time, they won the battle conclusively with many thousands of the Persians killed; even more drowned while crossing the river when retreating.

This battle, also known as the Battle of Buwaib, disappointed the Persians and they became embroiled in various civil wars that they fought to select

the next leader. As a result, they appointed Yazdegerd III as their king and prepared for another war with the Muslims.

Battle of Al-Qadisiyah

Following the many defeats in Iraq, Yazdegerd III started to prepare for another battle by cooperating with Heraclius. Their plan was to defeat the Muslim armies in the pockets of Iraq, which mostly was still under the Sassanid Empire, and then to push west within the Arabian Peninsula in an attempt to permanently remove the Muslim threat.

When Caliph Umar learned about the massive army preparations by Yazdegerd III, he too prepared a large army by calling on the nearby tribes to join the Muslim army. Considering the serious nature of the threat, he appointed Ali Ibn Abu-Talib to handle the caliphate affairs in his absence and personally set out to face the Persian Emperor. However, many of his commanders and leaders disagreed with him about joining the expedition. They thought it was not prudent for the leader of the Muslims to risk his life going into a war, especially as the Muslims faced insurmountable challenges against the alliance of two superpowers. After numerous consultations and discussions, Caliph Umar decided not to continue with the troops and instead appointed Saad Ibn Abi Waqas as the leader of the forces.

Saad Ibn Abi Waqas was one of the early converts of Islam and had embraced Islam at a young age. He was known to have immense love for his mother, who was a non-believer. His conversion to Islam deeply saddened and shocked his mother and she attempted to bring him back to the religion of his ancestors. When nothing worked, knowing her son's love for her, she decided to go on a hunger strike and promised her son that she would die of hunger if he did not leave Islam. Although Saad greatly loved his mother, he also told her that if she received more than a hundred lives and died after each life, he would not leave the light of truth that he had acquired by following Prophet Muhammad and his message of Islam. After she listened to this, she realized the futility of her efforts and thus ended her strike [\[52\]](#) .

Saad also had fought in numerous battles and is known to have played a prominent role in many of them. The Prophet was quite pleased with his performance and levels of his faith in Islam. As a result, the Prophet made a special prayer for Saad that Allah accepts all his prayers. The companions of the Prophet, therefore, related many incidents from their lives where Saad would make a prayer and it would be readily accepted.

After Caliph Umar made Saad the commander of the forces going to Iraq, Saad led his forces to Iraq and arrived at Al-Qadisiyah, a town 180 kilometers south of Baghdad. As the Persian forces had not yet arrived, the Muslim forces camped there for a few weeks. Later, the Persian forces arrived with a force that exceeded two hundred thousand and were led by their commander Rustam Farrukhzad. He was a nobleman and was highly respected for his bravery and charisma by the Persian Emperor and the Persians in general.

Before the battle, the Muslims sent a reconciliatory message through one of their envoys to the Persian General, Rustam. In return, Rustam wrote a long letter ridiculing the Muslims on their numbers and their aspirations to face the superpower of Persia. Muslims, then sent Mughira Ibn Shubah with a message of their own. Rustam again treated him rudely and promised Mughira to annihilate the smaller Muslim army starting at dawn the next day.

When the battle broke out the next day, numerous soldiers were killed on both sides. One of the Muslim soldiers was then able to approach Rustam's camel that was known to be carrying him and numerous weapons. The soldier was able to bring the camel down and eventually killed Rustam. This came as a big blow to the morale of the Persian forces and they immediately fell into a state of disarray and started fleeing the battle scene. Eventually, they fled the Ctesiphon (area of Madain located near present-day Baghdad) along with Yazdegerd III who used to rule from the palace. Saad ibn Abi Waqas and his forces then took over the city and Saad entered the Persian palace, which was a source of awe since the days when the Persian King, Khosrow (Kisra), ruled from its walls. Saad then became the governor of most of the region that is in present-day Iraq. Later, he took over other nearby areas that included Kufah, Najaf, Basrah, and others.

7.3 *The Battle of Nahavand in Persia*

After the defeat in Al- Qadisiyah, the Persian emperor escaped and started to prepare another army. He was able to rally support from further east from areas of Isfahan and Hamadan (in present-day Iran) and Sindh (in present-day Pakistan). In order to take the territory back, the Persians raised a one-hundred-thousand-strong army under the command of Piruz Khosrow.

Although the Muslim armies were battle-weary, they were able to gather under the command of Saad Ibn Abi Waqas to face the Persians once again at Nahavand, an area near present-day Hamadan, Iran. They outmaneuvered the Persians by spreading the rumor that Caliph Umar had died. On learning this, the enemy took the task easy and half-heartedly proceeded to the border. On their way, the Muslim army cornered them in Nahavand and closed in from all directions. A large number of Persian soldiers were killed in the battle, which Yazdegerd III then lost, and then Yazdegerd was not able to raise another army from the areas that were still under his control.

This was a decisive battle in which the Muslim armies had pushed further east into present-day Iran and uprooted the Sassanid Empire from Isfahan (present-day Iran) and other nearby areas. A soldier named Firouz (Pirouz) Nahavandi (also known as Abu-Lulu), who was a resident of Nahavand, was captured in this battle. This soldier would eventually assassinate Caliph Umar in Madinah.

After the battle, Yazdegerd III fled his capital and moved northeast to Merv (near Mary in present-day Turkmenistan) and then to Fergana (in present-day Kyrgyzstan). However, even before the Muslim conquest, the eastern regions had never liked the Sassanids, so Yazdegerd III was not able to muster any serious resistance against the Muslims. He also asked his other neighboring countries for help but to no avail.

7.4 *The Conquest of Jerusalem*

Jerusalem had been under the rule of the Byzantine Empire for almost five hundred years. With the Muslim conquests at Yarmouk (in Syria) and Al-Qadsiyyah (in Iraq), and subsequent military expeditions, Jerusalem got cut-off from the rest of the Byzantine Empire. Heraclius, who had fled to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) after his defeat, could not come to the help of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius. Knowing that the city was cut off from the Byzantine Empire, the Muslim forces sieged the city that was led by Abu-Ubaidah Al-Jarrah. He was assisted by Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed, Sharahbul Ibn Hassana, and Yazeed Ibn Abu-Sufyan (the same rulers that Caliph Abu Bakr had deployed in Syria). Once his forces surrounded Jerusalem (in 637 CE), Sophronius knew that the city would not last for more than a couple of months without fresh supplies. However, the siege lasted for four months after which Patriarch Sophronius decided to surrender the city to the Muslim forces with the condition that the city and its keys would only be surrendered personally to Caliph Umar.

Instead of waiting for months for Caliph Umar to arrive in Jerusalem, Sharahbul suggested that the caliph's cousin, Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed, who bore a striking resemblance to the caliph, meet Sophronius as the caliph himself. However, when Khalid (posing as Caliph Umar) went to ask for surrender, Patriarch Sophronius' soldiers recognized him and thus refused to surrender.

Abu-Ubaidah then invited Caliph Umar (who was in Madinah) to come to Jerusalem so that he could accept the surrender. Caliph Umar asked his advisors and on Ali Ibn Abu-Talib's recommendations, he decided to go to Jerusalem. During the last leg of their journey to Jerusalem, the caliph and the servant alternated riding the one animal they brought with them. As they approached the city, the Patriarch came out to receive them. He was quite shocked to see a party of two approaching the city instead of a large contingent of forces that usually accompanied rulers of states and commanders of armies. He was further stricken to see the servant riding the animal with the caliph walking, holding the reins. On further inquiry, he came to understand how Islamic teachings placed little value on the pomp

and show and luxuries of this life [53] . This humility and humbleness of the Muslims thus greatly impressed Sophronius and his entourage as by this time the Muslim rule had already extended to many territories that once were under the Byzantines and Sassanid Empires.

Once the caliph reached the outskirts of the city, the Patriarch brought him to the city on a camel and Caliph Umar traveled to the Boraq Wall [54] (referred to as the Wailing Wall by the Jews). Caliph Umar then traveled from the gate of Jerusalem to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (this church holds great significance for many Christians as it holds the site where Jesus of Nazareth was crucified and it holds the empty tomb where Jesus was buried and then resurrected). After arriving at the church, Caliph Umar wanted to take time to offer the Muslim prayers. The Patriarch offered the church for him to pray in, but the caliph refused giving the reason that if he prayed in the church, it would cause conflict between Christians and future Muslim generations who would surely want to build a mosque at that location. This, too, greatly impressed the Patriarch who then also surrendered the keys of the church to the caliph. As part of the terms of the surrender, Caliph Umar allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem.

The conquest of Jerusalem in 637 CE came as a big blow to Heraclius both politically and psychologically. After this loss, he was unable to muster any more serious threat to the Muslim forces. During his last days, Heraclius also became mired in a succession power struggle between two of his sons (Constantine III and Heraklonas), who were half-brothers. Heraclius died in 641 CE in Constantinople. After his death, both brothers shared the throne for a few months, after which Constantine III died of illness. Although Heraklonas became the Byzantine emperor, he, too, could not stay in power for too long due to various conspiracy charges. After Heraklonas, Constans II (Constantine III's son), became the Byzantine Emperor in the same year as Heraclius died (641 CE). Constans II then ruled the Byzantine Empire for more than twenty years.

7.5 The Conquest of Egypt

After the Battle of Yarmouk, a number of things changed for the Muslim Empire. It boosted the confidence of the Muslims and the Byzantines were left vulnerable to attacks in the rest of the Levant and Egypt. During the ongoing conquests of Levant, Caliph Umar ordered the start of the Egyptian campaign and named Amr Ibn Al-Aas as the commander of the army.

Amr started the expedition in 639 CE with four thousand men and marched toward Alexandria, a city located on the southeastern banks of the Mediterranean Sea. However, later, Caliph Umar realized that the size of the army was not big enough to face the stronghold of the Byzantines. He therefore sent a letter to Amr instructing him to retreat. Before Amr received the letter, he came to know about the letter that was sent to him and he suspected that he would be asked to suspend his campaign. Fearing that, he ignored the letter and did not open it until he reached a point where it was too late for him to retreat.

Caliph Umar, on the other hand, also knew that although he had sent the letter, Amr would insist on his forward march to Egypt and would find a reason not to comply with Caliph Umar's instructions. Therefore, he prepared a reinforcement of eight thousand men to send to Amr.

The siege of Alexandria proved to be a decisive blow to the Byzantine Empire. The highly fortified city had direct access to the sea and was a tough battlefield; the siege lasted for six months. By this time, Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor, had died and the backup army had dispersed. This resulted in the demoralization of the Alexandrians. This led to Cyrus of Alexandria, leader of the Byzantines in that area, surrendering Alexandria to the Muslim army in 641 CE. While Amr wanted to establish his rule in Alexandria, Caliph Umar considered it to be too far. The new capital, therefore, was established in a city called Fustat, which was approximately 200 kilometers southeast of Alexandria on the east bank of the River Nile. Fustat eventually turned into the present-day city of Cairo.

After conquering Egypt, Amr Ibn Al-Aas built the first mosque in Fustat. The mosque, called "Amr Al-Aas Mosque," is in the middle of Cairo and continues to service the prayer-goers until today.

7.6 The Great Famine and Plague in Umar's Era

In the year 638 CE, after a long spell of drought, a famine broke out in the Arabian Peninsula. Caliph Umar regulated and managed the food rations to help the Muslims get through the famine. However, after a while, the rations dwindled, and Caliph Umar declared a state of emergency in Madinah and other famine-hit regions. He asked his governors in Syria, Iraq and Palestine to send food rations and extra help as they were in a better situation than those around the Hejaz region (western Saudi Arabia).

Caliph Umar created a disaster-handling cell in Madinah that he headed personally. The first lot of rations to arrive was from Syria, which were sent to him by the governor of Syria. He also worked as an officer in the disaster cell.

During the famine, Umar arranged dinners for the masses in Madinah. The number of people in those camps had reached one hundred thousand people. In addition to controlling the disaster in Madinah and the areas in the vicinity, Caliph Umar also sent food rations deep into the Arabian states where the famine had wreaked greater havoc. After a grueling few months, by the end of the year, the famine came under control.

As the famine was ending in Arabia, a deadly plague broke out in Syria and Palestine. This was during the time when Caliph Umar was visiting those areas after the Byzantine Empire had captured them. During his visit at Elat, he met Abu-Ubaidah, who informed him of the plague that had hit his areas and Palestine. He told the caliph to go back to Madinah as it would be suicidal to go to those areas. Caliph Umar insisted that Abu-Ubaidah should also return to Madinah, but he refused to leave his troops in such hard times.

The plague lasted for one year. It finally ended in the last quarter of 639 CE but by that time it had claimed twenty-five thousand lives including the life of Abu-Ubaidah. After Yazeed Ibn Abu-Sufyan (not to be confused with Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah) took over as the governor of Syria, he, too, became

inflicted with the disease and died. Caliph Umar then appointed Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan as the governor of Syria.

7.7 *Assassination of Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab*

During his reign, Caliph Umar was known to be a very strict administrator, disregarding nobility in favor of serving justice. His stringent following of the rules and regulations made him well-respected among peoples of all classes, religions, and ethnicities. However, his incursions in various regions also earned him some hostilities. A fatal attempt on his life came when he returned from Hajj. A Persian in Madinah, Firouz (Pirouz) Nahavandi, also known by his Arabic name Abu-Lulu, was on good terms with the caliph. As was mentioned earlier, he was captured in one of the Muslim expeditions against the Sassanid Empire in Iraq. As he was talented in making windmills, Caliph Umar had earlier praised him for those talents. Because he was Persian and had close access to the caliph, the Persians hired him to assassinate the caliph. One day in 644 CE, as was the tradition, the caliph stepped out to lead the prayers in the central mosque in Madinah. During the prayers, as Umar was leading the Fajr Prayers (Morning Prayer), Abu-Lulu stabbed him six times in the belly and once in the navel. After the attempt he tried to flee, but was caught by the companions of the caliph. Abu-Lulu killed up to nine companions and then slit his own throat [\[55\]](#) . His suicide mission proved fatal for Caliph Umar who died three days later.

Before his death, he asked Aisha's permission to be buried next to the Prophet's grave. Aisha said that she had reserved that space for herself but then agreed to have the caliph buried there. After his death, Caliph Umar was buried next to the Prophet and Caliph Abu Bakr.

The Persians constructed a tomb honoring Abu-Lulu's (Firouz Nahavandi) efforts against what some refer to as the Arab invasion of the Persian Empire. This tomb is still located in the city of Kashan in present-day Iran [\[56\]](#) , and many from the Shiite sect visit the tomb to honor his deed. As

will be explained later, while Sunnis hold Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar in high regard, many from the Shiite sect hold opposing views.

Historians note that when Caliph Umar died, the Muslim Empire had reached its peak. Some further note that as Islam was still new in Makkah during the Prophet's time, Muslims were afraid to practice their religion openly in Makkah. It was only after the conversion of Umar that they dared to come out in the open. From then on, the status of Muslims continued its ascent until it reached its peak at Caliph Umar's death. Umar's reign saw victories in Iraq, Syria, the Persian territories, Egypt, Palestine (including Jerusalem and Gaza), Khurasan, and Azerbaijan. His forces were also able to penetrate the Sistan (Zabulistan) region, which is about 1,300 kilometers east of Basrah, Iraq. This area covers the present-day areas of southeastern Iran, and southwestern Pakistan and Afghanistan. In that region, which had become the southeastern-most regions of the Islamic caliphate, Caliph Umar's forces defeated Rai Sahasi, who was the last Buddhist king of the Rai Dynasty. Due to the scattered populations in those areas and the tough terrain, Muslims did not venture further east from this region and maintained loose control over those areas. This region later came under Chach of Alor, who was the Hindu Maharaja of Sindh. After Chach of Alor, his brother Chandar took over those areas. Chandar's reign lasted a few years after which Raja Dahir became the ruler. After a few years, during the caliphate of Banu Umayyah, he was then defeated by Hajjaj Ibn Yousuf's (a general from the Banu Umayyah Caliphate) forces, which were led by Muhammad Ibn Qasim. This is covered in more detail in chapter nine.

8 The Caliphate of Caliph Uthman Ibn Affan

Before his death, Caliph Umar had proposed six people to take over the caliphate after him. These people included Uthman Ibn Affan, Saad Ibn Abi Waqas, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, Abdur-Rahman Ibn Al-Awf, Talha Ibn Ubaid-

Allah, and Zubair Ibn Al-Awwam. He also said his first choice was Abu-Ubaidah Ibn Al-Jarrah and then Khalid Ibn Waleed but by this time, both had passed away. Caliph Umar asked them to select a caliph from amongst themselves through mutual consultation. After Caliph Umar's death, the six met to decide on a caliph. To make things simpler, Abdur-Rahman Ibn Al-Awf withdrew his candidacy and took on the role of arbiter of the group. He then asked if any amongst them wanted to give up their right as a candidate. On this, Talha, Zubair and Saad stepped forward and withdrew their candidacies. Abdur-Rahman Ibn Al-Awf, therefore, had to choose between Ali Ibn Abu-Talib and Uthman Ibn Affan. Abdur-Rahman took three days to consult the Muhajireen (the migrants that had migrated from Makkah to Madinah with the Prophet) and the Ansar of Madinah about both men. During this transition of power, Ali was forty-five and Uthman was in his mid to late sixties. After three days of consultations, Abdur-Rahman called both of them before the early morning prayers in the mosque before people started gathering. He spoke to both of them individually and sought their pledge on two points if he appointed them as the leader of the Muslims. The first point was to follow the Quran and Sunnah in their affairs in the same manner as the earlier two Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar did when they ruled the Muslims. His second point was that they would be the first to accept the other candidate as the caliph if they were not chosen. Both agreed and gave Abdur-Rahman their pledge to follow him on both points.

After the morning prayers, Abdur-Rahman stood in front of those who had gathered in the mosque, and addressed them by mentioning that he had consulted almost all of the men and women of the city about their views on the two candidates. During his consultations, he found that everyone had provided their support to Uthman Ibn Affan. Hence, as an arbiter, Abdur-Rahman pledged his allegiance to Uthman as the caliph. Next, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, who was the other candidate, also pledged his allegiance to Uthman followed by the rest of the people from the Muhajireen and Ansar. Hence, almost thirteen years after the death of the Prophet, Uthman Ibn Affan took over as the third caliph of the Muslims in 644 CE.

As mentioned earlier, Caliph Uthman was a very prominent companion of the Prophet. Although he had many qualities, he was more popularly known for two. First, he was known to have a very modest and shy personality.

Among the many hadith that attest to this, one of them states that the Prophet had once remarked that the angels showed modesty to Uthman the way Uthman showed modesty to Allah and His Prophet. His second quality was that of his generosity. As he was quite wealthy, he used to spend enormous amounts on charitable and Muslim causes. For example, when Muslims had moved to Madinah, he bought a well from a Jew and dedicated it to the inhabitants of the city. After becoming a Muslim, he started to free one slave every few days. He also helped to prepare multiple army expeditions.

The Prophet had much regard for him and married his daughter Ruqayyah to Uthman. After her death on the day of the Battle of Badr, the Prophet married his second daughter, Umm Kulthum, to Uthman. He is known to be the only person in Islamic history who married two daughters of one Prophet.

When Uthman became the caliph in 644 CE, Constans II was the Emperor of the Byzantine Empire and Yazdegerd III still ruled the Sassanid Empire. Although the Muslim armies had further expanded their reign to other regions such as the Caucasus, Armenia, North Africa, and other places, the Muslim armies also fought numerous other battles reclaiming territories that they lost both at the hands of the Byzantine and Persian armies.

A miller eventually killed Yazdegerd III in 651 CE in the city of Merv, and the unconquered parts of Persia fell to various warlords afterwards.

Although the Muslims accomplished much under his caliphate, many in history blamed his softness as the cause of the conflicts that started surfacing within the Muslim ranks that later turned into major divisions within Muslims and ultimately shaped future events. During the last few years of his caliphate, the epicenter of most events that shaped history was in Egypt, Basrah, Kufah, and Madinah.

8.1 *Second complete compilation of the Quran*

Under the Caliphate of Uthman and his predecessors, the Muslim armies had captured numerous territories in the Arab and non-Arab lands. As many non-Arabs were now becoming Muslims, the Arab and Muslim scholars noticed that the non-Arab Muslims were reciting the Quran in different ways, resulting in distortions of the original meanings. This triggered concern of a potential dispute between scholars in the coming years. Hudhaifa Ibn Al-Yaman reported one of such incidents [\[57\]](#) when he observed different manners of Quran recitation in Basrah, Kufah, and Syria.

Alarmed by the situation, Caliph Uthman decided to compile a new Quran based on the one that was earlier compiled by Caliph Abu Bakr and was preserved with Hafsa, the daughter of Caliph Umar and widow of Prophet Muhammad. He decided to write the Quran according to the Quraishi dialect because it was revealed in the same dialect to the Prophet. Caliph Uthman then asked for the compiled Quran from Hafsa and ordered Zaid Ibn Thabit, Abdul-Rehman Ibn al-Harith and Abdullah Ibn Zubair to make duplicate copies of that Quran.

The new validated copy was then made the standard across the caliphate. According to historians, four to seven copies were sent to each area in the Islamic region, which included Syria, Basrah, Kufah, Madinah, and other areas. The local leaders were then asked to make new copies from the ones that were sent to them. As an additional precaution, he also sent a reciter with each copy to teach locals about the correct recitation and pronunciation. To leave no room for error, Caliph Uthman also asked the local leaders to collect all the older copies from the masses and burn those copies.

Caliph Uthman's compiled Quran became the source of the Quran that is read all across the world today. It should also be noted that the sequence of the Surahs (chapters) and the ayaat (verses) as they appear in the Quran are the same as was taught by Angel Jibraeel (Gabriel) on Allah's command to the Prophet. Many narrations in hadith ascertain that fact as well. Al-Qaadi Abu Bakr mentioned the same in al-Intisaar and added that the order of the Surahs and ayaat is the same as Allah had commanded and they were not chosen by the Prophet, nor by Caliph Uthman. He further confirmed that the Mushaf (Quran) compiled by Caliph Uthman had the same order.

8.2 The Conquest of the Caucasus and Africa

In the early years of Caliph Uthman, he continued on the path of his predecessors to expand and stabilize the Muslim territories. Under his reign, he not only reclaimed some of the lost territories (that the Byzantines had taken over in smaller battles) but also expanded his rules to Caucasus in the northeast of the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa in the west, and areas of Khorasan in the east.

The Conquest of the Caucasus

The Caucasus region includes areas that are part of present-day southwestern Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and parts of Georgia. This region borders the Caspian Sea on the east and the Black Sea on the west. Most of the countries in the Caucasus, like Armenia and Georgia, were under Muslim control during the caliphate of Umar. Habib Ibn Musailamah had invaded those lands up to the Black Sea. However, after the death of Caliph Umar, a revolt broke out from local Christians with the help of Byzantine forces. To reassert the authority of the caliphate, Caliph Uthman launched a military campaign under the command of Habib Ibn Musailamah towards Georgia and Armenia.

After an initial few victories, the Muslim army faced a new threat as Constans II, the Byzantine Emperor, sent an army of eight thousand men to help the Armenians. As Habib Ibn Musailamah was leading a small force to counter the local rebellion, he asked for reinforcements against the new threat. Caliph Uthman then asked Waleed Ibn Uqbah, who had already recaptured Azerbaijan, to send reinforcements. An army of eight thousand men was sent to Habib Ibn Musailamah under the command of Salman Ibn Rabbiah. The combined Muslim forces then ultimately defeated the Byzantine army.

After the first battle and decisive victory over Byzantine forces, there was no other major battle during the campaign. As Muslim forces advanced into

Armenia, most of the towns and villages surrendered and accepted to pay the Jizyah tax for protection without a fight. After a few minor battles and skirmishes, the Muslim armies reoccupied the entire region of Armenia and Georgia. Caliph Uthman then merged all the regions of Caucasus into one province and placed it under the governorship of Ahnaf Ibn Qais. The newly-created province of Azerbaijan consisted of present-day Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan and some surrounding regions. Ahnaf Ibn Qais remained the governor of the Caucasus territories until the assassination and death of Caliph Uthman.

By the end of 646 CE (26 AH), Muslims had reached the Caucasus Mountains (present-day Russia) and added a new province of Azerbaijan to the Muslim State as well.

The Rebellion in Alexandria , Egypt

During the caliphate of Umar, Amr Ibn Al-Aas had captured Egypt and its capital Alexandria after defeating the Byzantine governor. After Caliph Uthman became the caliph, Constans II attacked Alexandria but Amr Ibn Al-Aas repulsed his attack and maintained his rule over Egypt. Amr Ibn Al-Aas had become very popular among the Muslims of Egypt as well as among the local Christian population. He had not only defended the city valiantly but his intelligence in governing the city earned him respect from all the Egyptians, too. However, despite this, Caliph Uthman replaced him with Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh (also known as Abdullah Ibn Saad), who was Caliph Uthman's relative. This resulted in much dissatisfaction among the people of Alexandria. With the mounting dissatisfaction among Egyptians and the fact that Caliph Umar and Amr were no longer ruling over Egypt, the Romans sensed another opportunity to retake Alexandria with the help of the local Christian population.

Thus, during the year 645 CE (25 AH), the Romans instigated a rebellion in the region, and in the following year the Roman army, along with the local Christian tribes, defeated the Muslim army and recaptured Alexandria. After this alarming defeat, Caliph Uthman reappointed Amr Ibn Al-Aas, the commander of the Muslim army, and sent him to retake Alexandria. Amr

marched toward Egypt, crushing all the rebellious tribes on the way, and once again defeated the Byzantine forces in the Battle of Nikiou, retaking the city of Alexandria.

Amr Ibn Al-Aas once again became the governor of Egypt with major administration duties of the government while Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh took the helm of the financial affairs of the region. A conflict between the two arose later after which Caliph Uthman removed Amr Ibn Al-Aas once again from his duties in Egypt and reappointed Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh as the new governor of Egypt. This repeated reappointment of Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh as the governor of Egypt resulted in discontent amongst many in Egypt and amongst the Prophet's companions, including Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr (son of the earlier Caliph, Abu Bakr).

The Conquest of North Africa (Tunisia, Libya, Algeria)

After the defeat of Byzantine forces in Alexandria, the Byzantine forces were pushed further to the west in North Africa. They then made Tripoli (present-day capital of Libya) their stronghold and started to incite local tribes to rebel against the Muslim rule on their borders. This made Caliph Uthman realize the necessity to drive away the Byzantine forces from North Africa to secure long-term stability and prosperity of the Muslim state.

At that time, the rest of North Africa was ruled by King Gregory the Patrician, who had declared independence from Byzantine rule after the Muslims had defeated the Byzantine armies. In 646 CE, the caliph then prepared a new army under the leadership of Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh (the ruler of Egypt) and included in it some of the prominent companions of the Prophet. These companions included Abdullah Ibn Abbas (son of the Prophet's uncle, Abbas), Abdullah Ibn Umar (son of Caliph Umar), Abdur-Rahman Ibn Abu Bakr (son of Caliph Abu Bakr), Abdullah Ibn Zubair (son of Zubair Ibn Al-Awwam), and Hussein Ibn Ali. After the army was formed, Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh left Egypt to lead the African campaign.

With the help of reinforcements in the form of ten thousand soldiers from Madinah, Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh launched a military campaign on Tripoli during 647 CE (27 AH) and defeated the Byzantine forces. Following this

campaign, another major battle against the large Byzantine army was fought at Yaquba in the following months. Muslims again defeated the Byzantine forces in the battle of Sbeitla (present-day Tunisia), in which King Gregory was killed. In the months that followed, Muslim forces captured all surrounding areas in North Africa including Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. Most of the areas agreed to pay Jizyah (tax for protection) for which Muslim armies left the administration to local leaders so they could return to their bases in the Arab lands.

8.3 The First Islamic Naval Force

With the aforementioned conquests, as Muslim armies had reached the shores of the Mediterranean, the need for a naval force became quite urgent as they were exposed to the Byzantine forces from those shores. Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan, who had been the governor of Syria since Caliph Umar appointed him during his reign, asked Caliph Uthman's permission to set up a naval force. Earlier, Caliph Umar had rejected the idea as the concept was quite novel to the Arabs, who were used to living in the desert, and they feared losing men at sea. However, pressed with new urgency, Caliph Uthman authorized the build-up and in 649 CE, Muawiyah started building a large naval fleet. He was quite instrumental in building the manufacturing facilities for the naval ships as well. This navy eventually helped them win a number of decisive sea battles against the already strong Byzantine Navy, ending the superiority of the Byzantine fleet in the Mediterranean Sea.

As mentioned earlier, Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan was Abu-Sufyan's son. Muawiyah was well respected by the Prophet and the Prophet was known to have made special prayers for him [\[58\]](#) . In another instance, the Prophet told Muawiyah that should he ever become a ruler, he should be just. Based on this incident, Muawiyah was certain that one day he would be a leader of the Muslims. [\[59\]](#) .

Once Muawiyah set up the navy, the Muslim Caliphate saw a critical need to establish bases elsewhere to counter the Byzantine Navy on other fronts. They found an opportunity to invade Cyprus, the island that was earlier

occupied by the Romans. The locals soon accepted the defeat and the Muslim Navy established its naval base at the island in 29 AH. As Muslims gradually gained territory in the waters of the Mediterranean (including the island of Rhodes), Abdullah Ibn Saad led the Muslim fleet of 200 ships and advanced towards the coast of Anatolia while Muawiyah advanced towards Cappadocia (historical region within Anatolia, Turkey) on land in 655 CE. The Roman Emperor, Constans II, was more worried about the invasion from sea, so he led a counter attack with 500 ships.

The two fleets faced each other off the coast of Lycia, Mount Phoenix in Turkey (northeast location of the Mediterranean Sea). The fierce battle (referred to as the Battle of Masts) took place between the Muslim Navy and the superior fleet of the Byzantine forces. Despite the long experience and much larger fleet of the Byzantines, the Muslim Navy of 200 ships defeated the Byzantine Navy. This defeat led to Constans II escaping to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul, located in the northwestern part of Turkey).

After the decisive victory, the Muslim Navy retreated to Alexandria, Egypt and Syria (the shores of Lebanon on the eastern Mediterranean). According to historians and scholars, one of the most prominent achievements of Caliph Uthman was establishing the navy as it eventually paved the way for Muslims to conquer Constantinople in the coming years. The naval forces also helped to expand the borders of the Muslim State to Cyprus and other South European states. After the defeat of the Byzantine fleet, the Muslim Navy retained their superiority in the Mediterranean for many centuries.

8.4 Renovation of the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah

With the expansion of lands under Muslim control, the population of Madinah was constantly on the rise. The mosque of the Prophet (referred to today as the Haram Mosque of Madinah) was no longer large enough to accommodate the growing number of Muslims who were pouring into the

city from the expanded caliphate. Caliph Uthman, therefore, planned to expand and rebuild the mosque of the Prophet. For that purpose, he bought a large piece of land with his own money and made it part of the mosque's area. However, others who owned and lived on the land nearer to the mosque refused to sell their properties. There were varied reasons why, but their emotional attachment to the mosque of the Prophet was a big factor. For the next four years, Caliph Uthman attempted to buy additional lands but had no success. Finally, during one of the Friday prayers, he delivered an emotional sermon on the subject and the difficulties that Muslims were having in not being able to pray in the mosque. This sermon finally led the land owners to either sell the land to the state or donate it to be made part of the mosque. This expansion took place during 650 CE (29 AH) and provided the needed space relief.

8.5 The Start of Conflicts and Disunity

The last few years of the Caliphate of Uthman were plagued with civil rebellions and strong opposition movements that had started in Egypt and Iraq (mostly in the cities of Kufah and Basrah). Unhappy due to a host of reasons, a few people had started to sow hatred against Caliph Uthman. Although it started in many quarters, it was initially instigated by a Jew named Abdullah Ibn Saba [\[60\]](#) . He had migrated from Yemen to Madinah and then later became a Muslim. Prominent Sunni scholars such as Ibn-Taymiyyah have mentioned that Abdullah Ibn Saba pretended to be a Muslim to sow the division amongst Muslims [\[61\]](#) . This was the reason that, immediately after becoming a Muslim, he started traveling back and forth between the key cities of the caliphate that included Madinah, Damascus, Alexandria in Egypt, Kufah, and Basrah.

One observes that Caliph Uthman made numerous changes in assigning governors to those cities. The reasons for those changes were varied and included peoples' general dissatisfaction with the governors and, in some cases, involved specific complaints against them. In an effort to maintain calm and stability, Caliph Uthman tended to react by making immediate

changes. This resulted in him appointing a number of people that were from his Banu Umayyah clan, leading people to accuse him of favoritism. Caliph Uthman's view was that, while in some cases the people that he appointed were the most qualified for those positions, in other cases they had been appointed by earlier caliphs (e.g. Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan, who was the governor of Syria, was appointed by Caliph Umar).

Although Uthman was not the first to appoint his trusted people or relatives to high government posts, he was the first one to receive criticism for doing so. Such criticisms on his handling of the affairs of the state became quite controversial, especially in the newly conquered areas of Egypt and Syria where he had appointed Abdullah Ibn Sarh and Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan as the governors.

Historical events clearly point the finger to Abdullah Ibn Saba for instigating this chaos and instability in various regions. Abdullah Ibn Saba was able to sow this discord through various ways, primary of which was to profess his immense love and respect for Ali Ibn Abu-Talib as he belonged to the Ahl-ul-Bayt. He, however, went further by claiming that he (Ali) deserved the caliphate rather than the appointment of the three caliphs, namely Caliph Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman. This belief among the supporters of Ali created a schism in the ranks of the Muslims that later widened to the extent of forming a separate sect called the 'Shiites'. Before continuing further with the story of Ibn Saba, therefore, this point needs special mention.

As was discussed earlier, the Prophet had singled out his family (called "Ahl-ul-Bayt" or "members of the household") in his love and based on the Quranic revelations about them. For example, the Quran specifically elevates the Prophet's wives as the "mothers of the believers" [62] and mentions that they "are not like any other women. [63]" The Prophet had also shown his love for his grandsons Hassan Ibn Ali and Hussein Ibn Ali (sons of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib) and mentioned them as being the "youth of paradise." According to another hadith [64], Caliph Abu Bakr had instructed the Muslims to pay special attention to the rights of the Ahl-ul-Bayt.

Based on these and other facts, the Sunni scholars have clearly stipulated that it is obligatory for the believers to love the household of the Prophet and to include them in prayers when asking Allah to send blessings on the Prophet. However, the division between Sunnis and Shiite beliefs starts to occur where the Shiite believe that Ali Ibn Abu-Talib should have become the caliph and leader of the Muslims after the Prophet's death. This contention is based on one of the hadiths in which the Prophet emphasized and reminded the believers in regard to the people of his household [65] meaning that Muslims should respect them. The Prophet had mentioned this at a place called 'Khum' on his way to Madinah when he was returning after the Conquest of Makkah. The place where he had mentioned this came to be known in history as "Ghadeer Khum" (the well of Khum). However, the Shiite version of this hadith also adds that the Prophet mentioned, "Anyone for whom I am the leader (mawla), Ali (Ibn Abu-Talib) is his leader (mawla)."

As mentioned earlier in chapter four, for Sunnis, the authenticity of the hadith (its narrators, number of narrators, credibility of the narrators, the chain of narration, etc.) is vital before a hadith can be accepted as 'Sahih,' or authentic. According to Sunnis, they find it odd that despite the fact the Prophet's group included thousands of believers who were returning with him after his 'farewell pilgrimage', no record exists for even a single hadith where this statement ("Anyone for whom I am the leader, Ali (Ibn Abu-Talib) is his leader") can be attributed to anyone. Moreover, there is no hadith or narration that is attributed to Ali Ibn Abu-Talib himself where he had corroborated the authenticity of this statement. In another narration by Qais Ibn Ubadah, people in Basrah asked Caliph Ali whether he was told by the Prophet in his lifetime that he should become the caliph after him. This angered Caliph Ali and he retorted by saying that if that had been the case, he would never have given his pledge of allegiance to the three caliphs before him [66] .

Another point held by Sunni scholars is that while the believers have an obligation to respect and love the companions of the Prophet and to give them their financial rights from the state [67] , there have been no instructions from the Prophet to provide them any preference over the others. So, according to the Sunni school of thought, the Shiite group's

claim that Ali Ibn Abu-Talib should have been selected as the caliph instead of Abu Bakr and Umar does not have any merit.

As for Abdullah Ibn Saba, once he was able to rally support behind his movement, he also started to doubt the interpretation of certain Quranic verses and started offering alternate interpretations to prove that Ali Ibn Abu-Talib deserved to be the caliph and the ruler instead of the three caliphs that had ruled to date (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman). He then started to use that argument to make the case for the removal of Caliph Uthman. His supporters came to be known as 'Shiat Ali' or 'party of Ali', and their objective became to replace Caliph Uthman with Ali as the caliph.

With the passage of time, his supporters split into three parties regarding their preference for a new caliph. His supporters in Egypt wanted Ali to be the caliph, whereas the ones in Basrah preferred Talhah, and the ones in Kufah preferred Zubair. Regardless of their choice, they were all united in their intentions to remove Caliph Uthman.

Sunni historians note that to pursue his rebellion, Ibn Saba started to visit various cities in the Arabian Peninsula to galvanize support for his cause to remove Caliph Uthman. In doing so, he was able to get support in Egypt, Basrah, and Kufah primarily because of the weak governance in those areas and because the governors were replaced quite often. On the other hand, when Abdullah Ibn Saba went to Syria to propagate his ideas and thoughts, he was rejected outright because of Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan's strong governance of Syria and the love of his people for him. Another testament to Muawiyah's strong hold on Syria was the fact that while Caliph Uthman was constantly getting complaints about governors in Egypt and Iraq (cities of Kufah, and Basrah), the caliph never received any complaint regarding Muawiyah from the people of Syria.

Some non-Sunni Muslims (including Shiites) who hold a critical view of Muawiyah counter that argument by mentioning that Caliph Uthman let Muawiyah stay in power because they both hailed from the Banu Umayyah clan of the Quraish. However, this claim does not hold any merit because Caliph Uthman had appointed and removed others from his family in other regions. For example, toward the end of his reign, based on peoples' requests and on Ali Ibn Abu-Talib's intercession, Caliph Uthman removed

Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh, who was his foster brother, from the governorship of Egypt and instead appointed Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr (son of the late Caliph Abu Bakr) as the governor.

After galvanizing enough support to replace Caliph Uthman, Abdullah Ibn Saba started to pursue another strategy that proved to be the final nail in the coffin. Based on his instructions, some of his supporters started writing forged letters on behalf of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, Talhah, and Zubair (who were in Madinah) inviting their supporters ('Shiat Ali') in Egypt, Kufah, and Basrah to proceed to Madinah to remove Uthman from his caliphate and to appoint one of the three as the caliph of the Muslims. This resulted in major chaos and disturbance. People in Egypt, and especially Iraq, had become quite bold in openly talking against Caliph Uthman and started calling for his removal.

As things escalated, Caliph Uthman first sent Ammar Ibn Yasir to Egypt and Muhammad Ibn Maslamah to Kufa to address peoples' grievances. However, as that did not have much of an effect, the caliph summoned all his advisers and the governors to Madinah to discuss the matter. It is worth noting that although the instigators were pushing the names of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, Talhah, and Zubair as the future leaders, none of the three agreed with the supporters. Instead, the three were actively part of Caliph Uthman's close circle as they were also the companions of the Prophet and knew the prohibition of such fitnah (trouble) and the need to pledge to the ruling caliph and leader.

During their discussions, the caliph, his governors and advisers concluded that peoples' calls for the removal of Caliph Uthman were unfounded and had little merit. Some of the governors, therefore, suggested arresting the troublemakers. Some went as far as recommending their killing because they were causing instability in the Muslim state. However, Caliph Uthman did not agree with capital punishment because he wanted to stay within the limits prescribed by the Quran and, according to him, he had not seen any justification of punishing people by death.

Objections of the Rioters

Although the primary reason that ‘Shiat Ali’ was inciting people to rebel against Caliph Uthman was because they wanted to make Ali the caliph, they had started to voice their other reasons as an excuse to disqualify him as a ruler. First, they accused the caliph of preferring his clan, Banu Umayyah, over others in appointing the military leaders and regional governors. Caliph Uthman’s response to such accusations was that most of the Banu Umayyah appointments (e.g. Muawiyah being the governor in Syria) were continuing from previous administrations. Besides, Caliph Uthman’s viewpoint was that he could only appoint those whom he trusted in such critical positions and sensitive times.

Their second objection had to do with Caliph Uthman disregarding the many Quranic dialects and scripts that had emerged throughout the Muslim lands, and instead uniting them on one script and dialect. As mentioned in section 8.1, the need for this was quite acute and Islamic history shows that this was a wise decision as it not only prevented the Muslims from continuing to argue on such matters, but also did not leave room for any distortions and innovations, thus uniting them on one standard recitation. This then enabled them to focus on the message of the Quran rather on other less important matters.

One of their other objections had to do with the alleged mistreatment of Abu-Dhar Ghifari, who was a close companion of the Prophet. Abu-Dhar was known to be quite active in charitable donations. Other than the essential necessities of life, he would not keep anything for himself. He held this viewpoint based on a Quran verse (Chapter 9, Verse 34) that warns against hoarding gold and silver (wealth) and instead asks the believers to give to charity. While living in Syria, Abu-Dhar started forcing his viewpoint on people. When Muawiyah (governor of Syria) learned about this, he discouraged Abu-Dhar because, in his view, the verse referred to hoarding money at the expense of not paying zakat (obligatory form of charity in Islam), but not to giving away all the remaining amounts that one has at his disposal. Thus, Muawiyah tried to convince him that he was basing his viewpoint on a wrong interpretation of the Quran. However, Abu-Dhar was not convinced and instead continued in his efforts that in turn caused a lot of dismay. As numerous people complained about this, Caliph Uthman asked Muawiyah to send Abu-Dhar to Madinah so he could

try convincing him otherwise. After Abu-Dhar came to Madinah, the caliph tried clarifying his misinterpretation of the Quranic verse and ordered him to stop advising people on this. This angered Abu-Dhar, who retreated to a place called Al-Rabatah, and he stated that he did not want to associate with the caliph and his people. After this incident, those who were against Caliph Uthman spread the rumor that the caliph had exiled Abu-Dhar as a punishment.

8.6 *The Siege and Assassination of Caliph Uthman*

These objections continued until a group of Egyptians set out for Madinah in 656 CE to oust the caliph from power. On finding out, Caliph Uthman met them outside the city in a bid to address their concerns and objections. In that meeting, they voiced additional objections. After Caliph Uthman successfully addressed their concerns, they were satisfied and headed back to Egypt. On their way, a person intercepted the Egyptians and showed them a letter supposedly written by Caliph Uthman addressed to the governor of Egypt ordering him to arrest this group of Egyptians on their return. Another person then showed them a letter written on behalf of Ali asking these Egyptians to return to Madinah and remove the caliph. This angered the Egyptians and they headed back to Madinah to confront Uthman about the letter. The caliph assured them that the letter was forged. They then went to Ali, who expressed his amazement at the letter (written on his behalf) and also denied any association to it. Thus, it became obvious that although these letters were forged, peoples' sentiments regarding the removal of the caliph had reached a point of no return.

In summary, the Egyptians collaborated with the Iraqis to lay a siege of his house. During the siege, the caliph ascended to the roof of his house and reminded everyone about his services to Islam. These included buying the land and making it part of the Madinah mosque, buying a well from a Jew and donating it to Muslim causes at a time when Muslims needed water in Madinah, and preparing the army and its supplies when the Prophet had

asked for help when going to the battle of Tabuk. On hearing this, the Prophet's companions who heard Caliph Uthman speak became quite emotional and wanted to fight the rebels. However, the caliph stopped them because he did not want to shed any Muslim blood in his name. The Prophet's companions then appointed their sons at the doors of Uthman to protect his house. These included Hassan Ibn Ali and Hussein Ibn Ali (appointed by their father Ali Ibn Abu-Talib), Mohammad Ibn Talha (Talhah's son), Abdullah Ibn Zubair (Zubair's son), and others. In due course, with pressure from the Prophet's companions, the rioters lifted the siege. However, in a bid to create pressure on Uthman to resign from his caliphate, the rioters again laid siege of the house of Caliph Uthman. In the days that followed, more rioters instigated by 'Shiat Ali' arrived in Madinah creating a tight curfew around the caliph's house for forty days. Even though the caliph still had majority, and the backing of powerful governors like Muawiyah, and was advised by some companions to use force against rioters, he decided against any action that had any potential of bloodshed amongst Muslims. However, on the fortieth day of the siege, when his house was being guarded by the companions and their sons, thirteen rioters secretly climbed the wall of his residence through adjoining houses and entered his house. Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr, the governor of Egypt appointed by the Caliph himself, was one of those thirteen rioters. He disrespectfully held the 82-year-old Caliph Uthman by his beard and insulted him, to which Caliph Uthman responded that had his father (Caliph Abu Bakr) been alive, he would have respected Uthman instead. This made Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr leave the rioters. However, immediately after that, the rest of the rioters repeatedly struck him with an axe and killed him. The caliph's wife, Nailah, tried to cover her husband and in that process lost her fingers. As Caliph Uthman was reciting the Quran when the rioters barged into his house, his blood splattered across the pages. Those Quran pages (with the blood traces) are still on display in the Damascus mosque.

As the next few pages of the book will show, the murder of Caliph Uthman instigated by 'Shiat Ali' eventually led to even more rebellions amongst the Muslims and later ended up dividing the Muslims into a separate group that now forms the Shiite (Shia) religion.

9 The Caliphate of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib

Unlike the period of the three caliphs, which had seen the expansion of the Muslim territories, Ali's caliphate was marred by internal struggles and revolts that kept surfacing one after the other. Most of these conflicts were associated with the killing of Caliph Uthman, which had resulted in an uproar in the Islamic Caliphate for many reasons. Caliph Uthman was a righteous leader and was one of the most prominent companions of the Prophet. Furthermore, he also hailed from a resourceful family and the clan of Banu Umayyah, which had produced leaders that ruled various parts of Arabia. For example, during the Prophet's time, Abu-Sufyan was the leader of the Quraish. His son, Muawiyah, was appointed by Caliph Umar as the governor of Syria and had proven to be quite effective in ruling Syria. Caliph Uthman was also quite mild-mannered and was loved by many companions of the Prophet. He was known to be the only person in history who married two daughters of a Prophet (He married the second daughter after the first one passed away due to illness.)

At the time of Caliph Uthman's murder, the rioters, led by Abdullah Ibn Saba, had overtaken Madinah. They were demanding that one from Ali, Talhah or Zubair take over the reign of the Islamic caliphate. All three initially rejected the offer because they wanted to distance themselves from their supporters who were being led and incited by Abdullah Ibn Saba. On learning that the three men were refusing leadership of the Muslims, Abdullah Ibn Saba hurried to Madinah and suggested that as, historically, Muslims in Madinah had always selected the Caliph, they should select one from the three candidates and then pressure them to accept the position. As the rioters were controlling the streets of Madinah, he further said that if the people of Madinah failed to select a leader, the rioters would kill all three candidates. Fearing more trouble and chaos, the people of Madinah approached the three men. Talhah and Zubair immediately declined and barricaded themselves from the rioters as well as from the people of Madinah. The people then asked Ali Ibn Abu-Talib to take the reign of the caliphate. Talhah and Zubair agreed to give Ali the pledge of allegiance on the condition that he would follow the Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah in

running the affairs of the Muslims and that he would actively pursue Caliph Uthman's killers and avenge his death. Ali Ibn Abu-Talib accepted those conditions and became the fourth caliph of the Muslims in the year 656 CE. The pledge, however, did not come from all areas of the Muslim state. Some of the Prophet's companions delayed the pledge for many reasons. Among those were other companions of the Prophet that included Saad Ibn Abi Waqas, Abdullah Ibn Umar, Usamah Ibn Zaid, Zaid Ibn Thabit, and others [68] . This group also included those from the Banu Umayyah clan. Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan, the governor of Syria, also decided to postpone his pledge until later. As he was the governor of Syria and was well-liked by his people, most in Syria held their pledges.

On assuming the role of the caliph, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib took it upon himself to first stabilize the unrest that had been brewing across the caliphate for the past few years and then to identify and exact justice on the killers of Caliph Uthman. However, that was not a simple matter primarily because a number of Caliph Ali's supporters that were part of the initial uprising against Caliph Uthman were still part of Caliph Ali's administration. This created a rift between Caliph Ali's administration and the supporters of Caliph Uthman that now also included the voices of Caliph Uthman's powerful clan, Banu Umayyah, who had started to demand justice for Caliph Uthman, who was one of their own.

Furthermore, Caliph Ali had still not been able to identify Caliph Uthman's killers as most of them had come to Madinah from Egypt and Iraq (Kufah and Basrah). When Caliph Ali asked Caliph Uthman's wife whether she could identify any of the killers, she was able to identify the physical appearance of only two of the rioters who had barged into their house. As for Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr, she mentioned that although he had accompanied the thirteen rioters to the house, he left immediately before the assassination. Thus, the identity of the killers was not well established. However, due to the public call of many to remove Caliph Uthman from power, it gave an indication that the conspirators hailed from Egypt as well as Kufah.

About Ali Ibn Abu-Talib

As mentioned earlier, Ali Ibn Abu-Talib was Prophet Muhammad's paternal cousin as well as his son-in-law (husband of his daughter Fatima) and was the first caliph from the Banu Hashim clan. He was the son of Abu-Talib who had raised the Prophet after the Prophet's grandfather had died. Ali was also the father of Hassan and Hussein, the two grandsons of the Prophet for whom the Prophet expressed his love numerous times in his life.

Ali, therefore, was from the family of the Prophet (also referred to as Ahl-ul-Bayt). One of the primary reasons that some of his supporters, like Abdullah Ibn Saba, instigated a rebellion to make him the caliph was because they had started to venerate the Ahl-ul-Bayt and started to believe that Ali, being a prominent member of the Prophet's family, should have become the caliph. This, therefore, became one of the contentious points that made this group ('Shiat Ali' or party of Ali) split from mainstream Muslims. The killing of Caliph Uthman (who hailed from the Banu Umayyah clan) was also the turning point where supporters of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib became hostile against the Banu Umayyah clan in general. This will become apparent later in the book.

It is important to highlight that while Sunnis today disagree with the incitement of the supporters of Ali that resulted in the killing of Caliph Uthman, and later resulted in a major schism in the Muslim ranks, they continue to hold Ali Ibn Abu-Talib in high regard. In fact, Caliph Ali was quite close to the Prophet and was liked by all of the Prophet's companions, including Caliph Abu Bakr, Caliph Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, and Caliph Uthman, and many other companions of the Prophet. One of the prominent Sunni scholars, Ibn Taymiyyah, mentioned [\[69\]](#) that Ali was not just part of the Ahl-ul-Bayt, he was the best of them and the best of the clan of Banu Hashim after the Prophet, and the Prophet made a special prayer for Ali and his family that included Fatima, and Hassan and Hussein. According to Sunni scholars, it was the veneration by the 'Shiat Ali' of Ahl-ul-Bayt to a level that crosses the thresholds of Islamic beliefs that eventually put the 'Shiat Ali' (Shiites) on a separate track, which later resulted in the evolution of their religious beliefs, doctrine, theology, and other religious matters. Ultimately, beyond simple disagreements, the Shiites forked into a separate sect.

Ali replaces governors appointed by Uthman

As mentioned earlier, Caliph Uthman had appointed several of his kin as governors in the expanding Islamic caliphate that had expanded to Syria in the north, Persia in the east, and North Africa and Cyprus in the west. His appointment of Waleed Ibn Uqba (one of his relatives) as the governor of Kufah was a controversial decision that irked the people of the city. Although Saeed Ibn Al-Aas replaced him later (also a relative of the caliph), this was another case where people had accused Caliph Uthman of nepotism. On becoming caliph, Ali Ibn Talib, therefore, made some immediate changes to stabilize the situation and suppress the unrest. Although some had asked him not to make immediate changes but Caliph Ali instead thought this would help stabilize the situation.

As he was making these changes to stabilize the unrest, uproar was brewing in Madinah pressuring Caliph Ali to bring the murderers of Caliph Uthman to justice by identifying them and punishing them. However, as the killers of Caliph Uthman were not clearly known, this task, along with his priority to stabilize the unrest in rest of the Islamic Caliphate, made it even more daunting. Besides, as a number of people in Caliph Ali's government and forces were those who had supported the removal of Caliph Uthman, this made the task harder still.

Although the calls to identify the killers of Caliph Uthman were raging across the caliphate, the voices of Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan, the governor of Syria, and Ayesha, the mother of the believers and the wife of the Prophet, were pressuring Caliph Ali to make this a priority. Both Muawiyah's and Ayesha's concern was not simply to ensure that justice was carried out, but also to quell the uproar that was getting louder by the day amongst many Muslims in Madinah and other parts of the Muslim territories.

9.1 The Battle of the Camel

Despite his efforts, Caliph Ali was unable to avenge the death of Caliph Uthman Ibn Affan in the early days of his caliphate. As mentioned earlier, he first wanted to strengthen his governance over the areas that were under Muslim control. Second, as the rebels and killers were suspected to be from Iraq, where various tribes were in a conflict with the non-Muslim tribes on the east of Iraq, Caliph Ali did not want to cause further unrest risking the security and stability of Iraq and the caliphate itself. Fearing an uproar from the tribes of Iraq, his priority, therefore, was to get matters under control throughout the Muslim empire, including Iraq.

Talhah Ibn Ubayd Ullah was the first person who had pledged his allegiance to Caliph Ali after which he and Zubair Ibn al-Awwam proceeded to Makkah to see the mother of the believers, Aisha, who had traveled to Makkah for pilgrimage. The three companions, and others, discussed the restless situation that was brewing in the Muslim state. Although they too wanted Caliph Ali to bring the rebels and killers to justice, they understood his dilemma, especially as it pertained to not ruffling feathers in Iraq and Egypt, which was the epicenter of the troubles due to Abdullah Ibn Saba. After mutual consultation, the three companions decided to head toward Iraq to convince the Iraqis to in turn ask Caliph Ali for justice for Caliph Uthman's killers. A number of people meeting in Makkah liked this plan thinking that if the request came directly from the people in Iraq, then the caliph may not be as fearful to pursue those rebels and killers that were suspected to have come from Iraq.

Some historians, however, relate a different story in that as Caliph Ali had not yet taken steps to identify the killers of Caliph Uthman, Aisha, Talhah and Zubair decided to take matters in their own hands and headed to Basrah to avenge the killing from the people in Iraq themselves. Those who were critical of their decision to bypass Caliph Ali in such matters, their response was that their pledge was contingent on Caliph Ali avenging the murder of Caliph Uthman, which had not happened until this time. Therefore, they decided to take a small army to Basrah (south of Iraq). Once planned, Aisha, mother of the believers, proceeded to Basrah with Talhah, Zubair, and their supporters.

On their way to Basrah, their caravan passed a town called Hawab, where Aisha heard the barking of many dogs [70]. She remembered from the time of the Prophet that he had prophesized about one of his wives passing this town where she would hear the dogs barking. Recalling his prophecy and the meaning that she had deduced from that hadith (that she should not continue on her trip), she decided to abandon her trip and turn back toward Madinah. However, Zubair convinced her to continue toward Basrah based on the Quran verses that encouraged reconciliation between Muslim believers in such times of conflict. In his view, as this trip was meant to bring the killers of Uthman to justice, this would resolve the unrest that had been brewing across the Muslim caliphate. Based on these arguments, she decided to continue toward Basrah.

Shia historians, however, believe that Aisha's intentions were to go to Iraq to wage war with Caliph Ali. However, the earlier narration, amongst numerous others, is one that proves that Aisha's intention to go to Basrah was only to try to reconcile the two groups. If she had the intention of war, she would not have thought of abandoning her trip at Hawab. Abu Bakr Ibn Al-Arabi [71], also confirmed that Aisha's intention was not to go and fight Caliph Ali but rather to go to Basrah because she was pressured by people to try and reconcile the two groups of people based on the tenth Quranic verse of Surah Al-Hujarat, which states ***"The believers are nothing else than brothers. So make reconciliation between your brothers, and fear Allah, that you may receive mercy."***

As they continued their trip toward Basrah, a few from the early rioters and Abdullah Ibn Saba's supporters informed Caliph Ali that Aisha was proceeding to Iraq with an army with the intention of breaking away from his caliphate and establishing her rule in Iraq. Although Caliph Ali had high regards for the mother of the believers, he also believed in the need to maintain unity amongst the Muslims under the authority of one reigning caliph. Based on this, he prepared an army and proceeded toward Basrah. He also commanded the governor in Iraq to prepare a local army to confront what he thought was Aisha's army. This caused a split in Iraq as well because a number of people in Iraq preferred to join Aisha's supporters because of her special status as the Prophet's wife and the mother of the believers.

Caliph Ali's forces reached Basrah anticipating facing the forces that were being led by Aisha, Talhah and Zubair. Both parties then sent representatives in an attempt to dispel any misunderstandings to avoid any confrontation, especially as both realized the long-term ramifications of such a conflict. Furthermore, both recognized the special love and respect that the Prophet had for both of them. Caliph Ali sent Abdullah Ibn Abbas and Aisha sent Talhah to these negotiations. Once the representatives discussed the matters, it became immediately clear to Abdullah Ibn Abbas the intention of Aisha and her group, which, as mentioned earlier, was simply to convince the tribes in Iraq to ask Caliph Ali to pursue Caliph Uthman's killers. The clarification of the misunderstanding calmed both parties and they decided to retreat for the evening.

History notes that this was one of the calmest evenings as misunderstandings between a prominent companion (Ali) and the mother of the believers (Aisha) were resolved. No one wanted to fight as both sides were being led by Islam's two prominent personalities. Zubair, who was siding with Aisha, also wanted to distance himself from any conflict. During the negotiations, Caliph Ali had reminded Zubair of a saying of Prophet Muhammad's where he had told Zubair that he would get into a fight with Caliph Ali, and Ali would be on the right side. Remembering this, Zubair became increasingly hesitant to fight against Caliph Ali. Zubair also remembered that the Prophet once said that a 'rebel' will kill a person named Ammar, and seeing that Ammar was on Caliph Ali's side, Zubair became increasingly disheartened and got the impression that fighting the Caliph was not a wise thing to do.

However, the rebels and the hypocrites from Iraq (especially those that had initially supported Abdullah Ibn Saba) did not want to see the matter resolved without a fight. One of the reasons was that, as they had Caliph Uthman's killers in their ranks, they suspected that the resolution of the differences between the two armies would turn the caliphate's attention to them. That night, therefore, the hypocrites went to both camps and killed many people while they slept. This left the impression that the opposing party had killed soldiers overnight. The next morning, this caused both parties to react in furor against the other and triggered a battle that escalated into a full-fledged fight. Talhah attempted to leave, but Marwan Ibn Al-

Hakam [\[72\]](#) , fighting in the forces of Caliph Ali, shot him with a poisonous arrow that killed Talhah in Basrah three days later.

Ibn Katheer mentions in his book, *al-Bidaayah wa an-Nihaayah* (7/270), that during the fight, Aisha's carriage on the camel (called 'hawdaj' in Arabic) was hit by many arrows, and when she thought that her life was in danger she started to call upon Allah to curse the killers of Caliph Uthman. When Caliph Ali heard her cries, he too invoked Allah's curse on the killers of Caliph Uthman. As Aisha's camel was in the middle of the battle and her supporters were defending it, the epicenter of the battle shifted to the camel. Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr (Abu Bakr's son, who accompanied the rioters to Caliph Uthman's house and Aisha's brother) was fighting with the forces of Caliph Ali along with Abdullah Ibn Saba, whose supporters were the primary instigators of this battle. After a while, Ibn Saba's supporters were able to injure the camel badly and brought it down along with the carriage. Despite the fact that the battle raged on and this posed a direct threat to Aisha's life, Caliph Ali intervened and approached Aisha's 'hawdaj' and greeted her with the title of 'mother' (her being the 'mother of the believers'). The battle eventually came to a halt as none from the senior ranks of Aisha and Caliph Ali wanted the fight in the first place. Caliph Ali then instructed Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr to take care of Aisha (as she was his sister) and take her to a safe place. Also, although it was normal for the winning army to collect the booty, Caliph Ali prohibited the collection of any booty because it involved the Muslims and this war started merely as a result of a misunderstanding. This disappointed a number of Caliph Ali's supporters. These supporters eventually became extremists and spread throughout Arabia; they were later referred to as the 'Khawarij' (dissenters).

After the assassination of Caliph Uthman, this battle was yet another black mark in the history of Muslims. Not only did it result in the loss of thousands of Muslim lives along with the death of many prominent companions of the Prophet, who were fighting on both sides, it left hearts soured for future generations. Abdullah Ibn Saba and his supporters had thus managed to split the Muslim ranks further because of their instigation. An important point to highlight here is that at this stage, the split in the ranks between Muslims had picked up a momentum of its own and Abdullah Ibn Saba's name no longer became relevant. In fact, many in the

Shiite religion do not acknowledge his existence. Some Shiite sources, however, discuss him in more detail. According to al-Rijaal of Abu-Umar Muhammad Ibn Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Kashi, a book considered authentic by many Shiites, Abdullah Ibn Saba's views became even more extreme later in Caliph Ali's time [73] and he attributed divinity to Caliph Ali, specifically claiming that Caliph Ali was God (Allah). He had done something similar when he was a Jew, as he had attributed lordship to Joshua Ibn Nun who had come after Prophet Moses' death [74] . On learning that Abdullah was likening Ali to God, Caliph Ali summoned Abdullah Ibn Saba and asked him to repent and to refrain from making such claims because these were not only in direct contradiction to Islam's message, but it risked creating further schisms amongst the Muslims and more rebellions. However, Abdullah Ibn Saba did not back down in making such claims. Caliph Ali initially imprisoned him, and later he was ordered to be killed.

It is not known whether any people in Caliph Ali's time believed in Abdullah Ibn Saba's message regarding attributing divinity to Caliph Ali. The only group today who comes close to what Abdullah had professed are the Alawites of Syria (the small group in Syria who also rule Syria) as they attribute divinity to Caliph Ali. Sunni scholars [75] , therefore, consider them out of the fold of Islam. These groups were earlier called the 'Nusairis' named after their leader Muhammad Bin Nusair Al-Numairi. The word 'Alawi' in Arabic means 'follower of Ali'.

Due to the Battle of Camel, some historians, especially those supporting the Shiite doctrines, ended up positioning Aisha as the enemy of Caliph Ali. Because of this, Shiites dishonor her character, which is contrary to Sunni beliefs who in turn hold her in very high regard. She was not only the 'mother of the believers' (as mentioned in the Quran) but the Prophet too had expressed his utmost love for her. Numerous authentic ahadith and narrations attest to the high status of Aisha in Islam. In one of the hadiths, the Prophet regarded her as the most knowledgeable of the women and her father (Abu Bakr) as the most knowledgeable amongst men [76] . Furthermore, in the Prophet's time, some had slandered Aisha and as a result the Quranic verses (11 to 21) in Surah Noor exonerated her of that slander. The verses also referred to those who slandered her as "liars". As

for her regard for Caliph Ali, many ahadith attest to the fact that she held him and his knowledge in high esteem. In one instance, Shurayh Ibn Hani asked Aisha about a religious matter regarding cleaning oneself for prayers. Instead of giving him an answer, she directed him to Caliph Ali saying that he had more knowledge about that subject than she did [\[77\]](#) .

9.2 The Battle of Siffeen

After the Battle of Camel, Caliph Ali turned his attention to Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan in Syria who still had not pledged his allegiance to Caliph Ali primarily because Caliph Uthman's assassins had not been arrested. Caliph Ali's viewpoint on this matter was that the unity of the nation under one leader was unconditional and independent of such disagreements. Muawiyah, on the other hand, held a different view despite the fact that he had enormous respect for Caliph Ali and never questioned Caliph Ali's right to be the caliph. He also had repeatedly said that he considered Caliph Ali to be a better person than himself.

There is another viewpoint that is shared by certain Sunni historians. Some have suggested that Muawiyah did not see Caliph Ali worthy of the appointment because people who were against Caliph Uthman, especially the likes of Abdullah Ibn Saba, were supporters of Caliph Ali and therefore by association he did not deem Ali to be worthy of the caliphate. Instead, Muawiyah favored that after Caliph Ali hands over the killers of Uthman to the state, the Muslims should elect a new caliph. Furthermore, the fact that Caliph Ali had not demonstrated an outright effort to bring the killers of Caliph Uthman to justice further reinforced his beliefs.

As Syria had become a major issue for Caliph Ali, he wanted to be closer to Syria to handle these issues. Based on this and the fact that Kufah (in central Iraq) was closer to Damascus than Madinah, he thought it appropriate to shift the caliphate center to Kufah. Besides, due to Abdullah Ibn Saba's earlier efforts in venerating Caliph Ali and leading the campaign to replace Uthman with Ali, many in Kufah had started to revere Caliph Ali and the 'Ahl-ul-Bayt'.

Muawiyah had a list of reasons for not pledging allegiance to Caliph Ali. First, as Caliph Uthman was part of the Banu Umayyah clan, he was demanding justice for Caliph Uthman who was also his cousin. Caliph Ali's viewpoint was that, as Muawiyah had not accepted Ali as a leader, he had no right to make such demands. Muawiyah's second reason for not accepting Ali as the leader was that as the suspected killers of Caliph Uthman had infiltrated the army of Caliph Ali, he could not trust Caliph Ali's army to provide any protection to Muawiyah and his people. Muawiyah further highlighted the fact that as those suspected rebels and killers did not respect Caliph Uthman as a leader and ultimately killed him, he could not expect them to respect and protect Muawiyah, who was a cousin of Caliph Uthman and from the Banu Umayyah clan. Third, his demand was that as he was the guardian of Caliph Uthman and acting on behalf of his clan, he had the right to avenge the death of Caliph Uthman based on Islamic teachings. Fourth, Muawiyah's assertion was that he could not pledge his allegiance to a caliph who had not done justice in terms of arresting the assassins. Finally, his point was that even Caliph Ali had delayed his pledge of allegiance to Caliph Abu Bakr by almost six months (section 6.1), so Caliph Ali, too, did not have the right to demand an immediate allegiance from Muawiyah himself.

However, as Caliph Ali did not want Muslims split into various groups, he pursued his goal to seek the pledge of Muawiyah and the Syrians under his rule. He therefore prepared an army to confront Muawiyah in Syria. A number of Caliph Ali's supporters, who were also from the companions of the Prophet, did not want to be a party to this conflict. Amongst them were Abdullah Ibn Umar Al-Khattab (son of Caliph Umar), Saad Ibn Abi Waqas (the general who conquered most of Iraq and led the forces in the Battle of Al-Qadsiyyah), Abu-Ayyoub Al-Ansari, Usamah Ibn Zaid, and others. They preferred to stay away from this fight without taking any sides in this conflict. Their focus instead was to try to reconcile between the two parties.

As Muawiyah learned of Caliph Ali readying his forces to come to Syria, he, too, prepared a large army. Caliph Ali's army moved through the Syrian Desert and confronted Muawiyah's army at Siffeen, a location called Ar-Raqqah in present-day Syria. Ar-Raqqah is located on the banks of the Euphrates River, 500 kilometers northeast of Damascus and 700 kilometers

northwest of Kufah. Once both armies arrived, knowing the terrain and the area of Syria, Muawiyah's army took over all the main sources of water near the Euphrates River. Both armies encamped here for more than 100 days, most of which were spent in negotiations. Again, Caliph Ali wanted Muawiyah to pledge his allegiance to Ali's caliphate, whereas Muawiyah wanted Caliph Ali to pursue the conspirators and killers of Caliph Uthman, some of whom he believed were hiding in the ranks of Caliph Ali.

As negotiations continued, Caliph Ali again found himself in a similar situation where neither he nor Muawiyah wanted to engage in a battle. Not only were both from the companions of the Prophet, but both were loved by him as well. However, once it became clear that none of the parties were going to back down from their positions, a battle broke out (this occurred in June 657 CE (37 AH)). Both sides had issued orders that made it clear that this battle, too, was not going to follow the standard norms of warfare. The fleeing party was not to be chased and killed nor was anyone supposed to be looted for any wealth or war booty (as per Islamic teachings). Historical accounts of those who fought the battle from both sides makes it clear that the battle was fought halfheartedly as most had hoped for a resolution. As the battle continued, numerous people were killed from both sides. One famous example demonstrates the lack of hostility on either side during the course of the battle. As Caliph Ali's forces did not have access to the main water sources, they started to face increasing difficulties during the battle. Because of this, one of Caliph Ali's soldiers approached Muawiyah's forces and requested access to water. At this request, Muawiyah did not object and allowed Caliph Ali's forces to access the water. The protocol that was agreed between the two forces allowed Caliph Ali's forces to have access to water in the evening. Historians report that in the evening, at the conclusion of the battle, Caliph Ali's soldiers would go through the military columns of Muawiyah to get water, and according to the agreement, they would not be attacked. The Sunni scholars use this example to debunk the claims of others and to demonstrate that Muawiyah's goal was not to grab power from Caliph Ali.

Ammar Ibn Yasir was fighting on Caliph Ali's side. When he was killed in the battle, Abdullah Ibn Amr Al-Aas, who was from Muawiyah's party but was not fighting, went to his father, Amr Ibn Al-Aas (earlier governor of

Egypt), and informed him of Ammar Ibn Yasir's death. He mentioned that the Prophet had said that Ammar would be killed by the rebellion party. This made Amr Ibn Al-Aas worried (thinking that they belonged to the wrong party). In this context, Ibn Taymiyyah noted [78] that the armies did not think of this hadith until Ammar was killed, who, according to the hadith of the Prophet, would be with the truthful party. Although Amr Ibn Al-Aas informed Muawiyah of this, he did not believe that he could resolve the situation.

Scholars have mentioned another hadith where the Prophet foretold the two parties would fight each other to uphold the truth. He said one of the two parties would later fight another group of people called ‘Khawarij’ (the group that left Caliph Ali and were called dissenters). The party who would fight the Khawarij would be the party that would be ‘closer to the truth’ in the context of the first fight. Based on this hadith, the scholars had stipulated that although both Caliph Ali and Muawiyah’s forces were fighting for the truth, Caliph Ali was ‘closer to the truth’. They emphasize this point as in this case, the Prophet did not label this fight as one between “truth” and “evil”. The point is that although Muawiyah had a valid case for his position, the matter to pledge allegiance to a leader is more important than the disagreements that lead to disunity.

As the battle raged on, both sides lost thousands of Muslim soldiers. Many companions of the Prophet approached Muawiyah and Caliph Ali pressuring them to find a way to stop the fighting, but none was able to find a way. Then, one of the companions approached Muawiyah and recommended that his army raise the Mushaf (Quran book) on their spears as a signal to stop the fight and to decide the case based on the Divine message in the Quran. Muawiyah accepted this proposal and his army raised the Quran on their spears and swords. No sooner did Caliph Ali come to know about this, he too ordered a halt to the fighting.

As the battle subsided, both parties agreed to attempt to resolve the case through mutual arbitration. Muawiyah selected Amr Ibn Al-Aas, an Egyptian war veteran who in previous administrations had conquered Alexandria from the Byzantines. Caliph Ali, on the other hand, selected Abu-Musa Al-Ashari as his representative. Both arbiters then met for

negotiations and agreed on a basic framework to resolve the matter. The first was that as the battle scars were fresh and as both parties had lost a large number of people (including family members, companions, and so on), it was not prudent to make any sudden decisions. The idea was that no matter what decision they agreed on, it was bound to upset a certain segment of the population. Therefore, they decided to delay the decision until the month of Ramadan that year on the basis that with the passage of time, the situation would be calmer then, and also that the spirit of the month of Ramadan would encourage more concessions from both sides.

When Ramadan came, Muawiyah went to Dawmat al-Jandal where the two parties had agreed to meet. However, Caliph Ali did not go there as he was preoccupied with fighting the Khawarij and the Battle of Siffeen was something that he did not want to think back on as it was a dark chapter in the history of the Muslims. From that point on, Muslims were ruled (for a shorter time) by two Caliphs. Muawiyah ruled over the areas of Syria whereas Caliph Ali continued to rule over the other areas of Arabia (the areas of Hejaz and Iraq).

The Shiite and other sources, however, paint a different picture. They contend that when the two arbiters met, they decided that both Caliph Ali and Muawiyah should be deposed of their positions. They state that after the representatives had decided on this matter, Muawiyah's representative denied from agreeing to such a judgment, giving the impression that Abu-Musa Ashaari was deceived. Many Sunni historians do not agree with this version simply because both sides knew the importance of appointing arbiters and followed up on the process for six months. Therefore, it seems too simplistic and unrealistic for one arbiter to simply state a lie and back out on the original verdict.

9.3 The Khawarij and the Battle of Nahrawan

After the conclusion of the Battle of Siffeen, a group of Caliph Ali's supporters strongly disagreed with the caliph's decision to stop the battle. A person named Urwah Ibn Jareer questioned Caliph Ali's judgment in

agreeing to stop the battle. Their contention was that as they were closer to victory, Muawiyah's forces had used an excuse to stop the battle and Caliph Ali should not have agreed to stop the battle. This group then gathered a sizable following (in the thousands) and they broke away or dissented from Caliph Ali's forces. These people, therefore, were called 'Khawarij' or dissenters. This group appointed Shabath Ibn Ribī as their leader, who was Caliph Ali's emissary to Muawiyah during the peace negotiations.

However, history shows that their dissention was not simply because of this specific matter. They had started to have different opinions with the companions of the Prophet on various religious matters. This is because they used to take the religious teachings, especially the verses of the Quran, out of context [79]. This group, therefore, started to disapprove of most of the decisions of the companions of the Prophet and went to extremes in following the religion. In many cases, their interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah was due to lack of complete knowledge, as will be explained later in further detail.

According to Ibn Al-Jawzi [80], a renowned Sunni scholar and theologian, the Khawarij were outwardly very pious and considered themselves more knowledgeable than the companions of the Prophet. This should not come as a surprise because, even in the Prophet's time, there were a few who had started to challenge the Prophet on the decisions that he made, which contradicts the notion of the Prophet being the messenger of God. Ibn Al-Jawzi mentions one of the examples of a person named Thul-Khuwaisarah at-Tameemee as one of the first members of this group who lived during the Prophet's time. Once, when the Prophet was resolving a dispute, Thul-Khuwaisarah retorted the Prophet by reminding him to 'fear Allah' and that he had been unjust in deciding the case. This made the Prophet question him as to whether he doubted the Prophet (being a messenger of God) of not fearing Allah the most. At this, Thul-Khuwaisarah rudely walked away from the Prophet. As he walked away, the Prophet said that from Thul-Khuwaisarah's progeny would be people who would recite the Quran but it would not pass their throats [81] (meaning that their worship would not be accepted).

The Khawarijs who split from Caliph Ali's forces in Siffeen were very disappointed when the fighting between Caliph Ali and Muawiyah ended. After they split from Caliph Ali's forces in Siffeen, they marched toward Kufah and camped on the outskirts of the city in a village called Harura. By this time, Caliph Ali had returned from the Battle of Siffeen. As the Khawarijs increased in numbers in the town of Harura, they became a cause for concern. One of their special characteristics was their slogan (based on certain Quranic verses) that said 'all judgment belongs to Allah'. They also appeared very clean and pious in their outward appearances and stayed together as a group. As Caliph Ali contemplated how to deal with them in Kufah, Abdullah Ibn Abbas asked the caliph's permission to go and find out more about their cause and demands. Caliph Ali initially refused as he told Abdullah that he feared for his life. However, after some convincing, Caliph Ali gave him permission to speak to them, although he had little hope to gain much from these discussions.

Abdullah Ibn Abbas donned one of the best Yemeni dresses before going to talk to the Khawarij who were camped at Harura. When he reached them and expressed his intentions to discuss the matter with them, some of them refused to speak to him stating that as he was from the clan of the Quraish, there was no point in having any discussions with him as Allah had mentioned in the Quran [\[82\]](#) that those people (from Quraish) were quarrelsome. Some of them, however, agreed to talk to Abdullah Ibn Abbas, who in turn asked them about the reasons for splitting with Caliph Ali. They mentioned three reasons to Abdullah Ibn Abbas. First, they objected that Caliph Ali had agreed to have two men negotiate and resolve the matter in the Battle of Siffeen, whereas Allah mentions in a few places in the Quran that judgment only belongs to Allah [\[83\]](#). Their point was that as resolution of all matters is in the hands of Allah, then Caliph Ali should not have taken the matters into his own hands and instead should have left the battle to continue, with Allah deciding the matter on His own.

Their second objection with Caliph Ali was that after winning the Battle of Camel, the caliph had refused to take any war booty and captives from the army of the mother of the believers, Aisha, Talhah, and Zubair. Their objection was that the Prophet had always taken booty and captives after the battles he fought in his lifetime.

Their third and final objection against Caliph Ali was that when he had temporarily granted his authority to Abu-Musa Al-Ashary to resolve the matter in the Battle of Siffeen, he gave away his title of “Ameer ul Mumineen (leader of the believers)” for the duration of the arbitration. According to them, if he was no longer the ‘leader of the believers’ during the negotiations, then he must have been the ‘leader of the unbelievers’, and thus there was no obligation for others to follow him.

After they presented these objections to Abdullah Ibn Abbas, they demanded that Caliph Ali repent for his sins before they would consider rejoining him. Abdullah Ibn Abbas, on the other hand, proceeded to address their objections. To the first objection (all matters are for Allah to decide, as stated in the Quran), he clarified that they had taken the Quranic verse out of context and mentioned another verse [\[84\]](#) to highlight two points. This verse refers to the case that when a person is in a state of Ihram (garments that the person wears when in a state of pilgrimage), he is not allowed to hunt. However, if he does so by mistake then he should sacrifice an animal like a rabbit, deer, etc. as expiation for that sin. The verse instructs that the case be “judged by two just men” hence delegating the matter of deciding the type of animal as expiation to people of knowledge. Abdullah Ibn Abbas highlighted that if Allah had willed, he would have stated his decision of the specific expiation of that sin in the verse itself, but instead he delegated the decision to two able and knowledgeable people. Abdullah Ibn Abbas’s point was that if Allah can delegate such a small matter to people, resolving the matter to resolve a dispute between Muslims (as in the battle) deserved more attention and thus there was no harm in delegating that to others.

After the Khawarij accepted this response, Abdullah Ibn Abbas proceeded to respond to the second question related to Caliph Ali not taking captives in the Battle of Camel. He asked them if it would seem acceptable to them if Caliph Ali would have taken the mother of the believers, Aisha, as a captive, about which the Quran specifically states that the Prophet’s wives are the mothers of the believers [\[85\]](#) . They agreed with that response as well, after which he proceeded to answer the final objection related to Caliph Ali agreeing to have temporarily given up his title of ‘leader of the believers’ during the negotiations. On this, Abdullah reminded them of the incident of Hudaibiyah (mentioned in section 5.3), where the Prophet had

agreed to remove his title of “Messenger of Allah” at the insistence of the unbelievers from the document of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah. Abdullah Ibn Abbas also highlighted the fact that if the Prophet could have agreed to not include his title of “Messenger/Prophet”, which was more important than that of a ‘caliph’, why would it be inappropriate for Caliph Ali to agree on the same for a matter that involved reconciliation between Muslims.

On hearing this, a number of the Khawarij saw their error of misinterpreting the Quranic verses due to their limited understanding of the Quran [\[86\]](#) . Therefore, a group of approximately two thousand broke away from the Khawarij and accompanied Abdullah Ibn Abbas to join Caliph Ali. The remaining, although convinced of the counter arguments presented by Abdullah Ibn Abbas, refused to join Caliph Ali and remained part of the Khawarij. They kept chanting the verse that had become the slogan of their group that says “...Judgment only belongs to Allah”. After their meeting with Abdullah and losing part of their group, the Khawarij left Harura and headed back toward Syria. On their way, they saw a person named Abdullah Ibn Khabbab who was the son of one of the Prophet’s companions, named Khabbab. The Khawarij asked him about his opinion of Caliph Ali. When Abdullah Ibn Khabbab praised the caliph, the Khawarij became furious and brutally killed him and his pregnant maid.

As news of this reached the caliph, he immediately gathered an army that went to them and demanded that they hand over the killers of Khabbab. Not only did they refuse to name the person who had killed Abdullah Ibn Khabbab, they all took the blame for killing Abdullah Ibn Khabbab. Caliph Ali continued with his demand but they refused to hand over the one who had killed Abdullah. After this, Caliph Ali's forces attacked them and a battle ensued that came to be known as the Battle of Nahrawan because of the location where it was fought. However, as Caliph Ali’s forces outnumbered the Khawarij, most of the Khawarij were killed with the exception of less than ten soldiers that escaped. Caliph Ali’s forces lost no more than ten of their soldiers.

The few Khawarij (less than ten from this army) who escaped included Abdur-Rahman Ibn Muljam, Burk Ibn Abdullah at-Tameemee and Amr Ibn Bakr at-Tameemee. After escaping the battle, they met and remembered

their compatriots and spoke ill of the three companions of the Prophet, namely Caliph Ali, Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan, and Amr Ibn Al-Aas (the one who represented Muawiyah in the negotiations with Caliph Ali's representative). Ultimately, they decided to avenge the deaths of their losses. Abdur-Rahman Ibn Muljam took on the task of killing the caliph, who was in Kufah (the capital city of the Muslim state). Burk Ibn Abdullah at-Tameemee took the task of killing Muawiyah, who was in Syria, and Amr Ibn Al-Aas was to be attacked in Egypt by Amr Ibn Bakr at-Tameemee.

Ibn Muljam went to Kufah, and when Caliph Ali was leaving his house for the morning (Fajr) prayers, Ibn Muljam hit him on the head with a sword, ultimately killing Caliph Ali. Similarly, Burk Ibn Abdullah headed to Damascus, Syria to kill Muawiyah. He too was able to get close to Muawiyah and, although he attacked him, Muawiyah did not die of those injuries and ultimately recovered. As for Amr Ibn Bakr, who was tasked to kill Amr Ibn Al-Aas in Egypt, he attacked someone else, mistaking him for Amr Ibn Al-Aas and thus was unsuccessful.

The killing of Caliph Ali was quite traumatic for the Muslims. However, the events that led to his burial are disputed. Some narrations indicate that although he died in Kufah, his son Hassan Ibn Ali took his body and buried him at an undisclosed location, fearing that the Khawarij would desecrate his body. Other narrations state that his body was taken to Madinah but got lost on the way due to various reasons. The Shiites, however, believe that Caliph Ali is buried in a grave in the Imam Ali Mosque located near the city of Najaf, Iraq, which is about 150 kilometers south of Baghdad. The Shiites consider this mosque to be the third holiest site after Makkah and Madinah. Millions of Shiite pilgrims attend this mosque annually.

According to Sunnis, however, as the concept of revering graves and saints contradicts core Islamic beliefs, this mosque has no religious significance for them. Many ahadith attest to this as well. According to an authentic hadith narrated by Imam Ahmed, the Prophet strictly forbade the believers to take graves as places of worship and those temples with pictures in them. The Prophet took this matter so seriously that he mentioned this on his

deathbed as well. Various Sunni Islamic scholars have written extensively about this subject [\[87\]](#) .

10 The Start of the Banu Umayyah Caliphate

After the attack on Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, and as his prognosis was not encouraging, his companions asked him if he would appoint his son Hassan Ibn Ali as the next caliph. However, he refused to make any appointments and asked the people to decide through mutual consultation. As Ali was well-loved, especially in the city of Kufah where he had his caliphate capital, people chose Hassan Ibn Ali as the next caliph of the Muslims. When he started handling the affairs, like his father, he too was under pressure to resolve the situation in Syria in which Muawiyah had not yet taken the pledge and the Muslim territories remained split into two caliphates. People, therefore, started to pressurize him to take his forces to Syria to confront Muawiyah. Although Hassan did not wish to do so, he succumbed to the pressure of the people who had gathered in large numbers outside his office. Thus, he prepared an army and proceeded to Syria.

On his way to Syria, he sent a proposal of reconciliation to Muawiyah. Hassan proposed to relinquish the caliphate of the Muslims in favor of Muawiyah, if he promised the people to rule in accordance with the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, similar to the caliphs before him. Muawiyah agreed to this condition, and thus Hassan Ibn Ali passed on the baton of the caliphate to Muawiyah Ibn Sufyan after reigning as a caliph for around six months.

Although there were pockets in the larger population where people did not agree with this handover, the transfer of power from Hassan Ibn Ali to

Muawiyah was welcomed by most Muslims for two reasons. First, as Hassan Ibn Ali had willingly transferred his caliphate to Muawiyah, this was considered as a reconciliation between the two groups. After a few years of fighting between the Syrians and the Iraqis, Muslims had become disenfranchised with the mutual wars. A unified caliphate gave people the opportunity to avoid being in a state of constant war, and allowed them to start the healing process. Second, Muawiyah had been a companion of the Prophet and was one of the scribes who documented his sayings. He had ruled over the areas of Syria for the past few years and was known to be a good administrator. This was evident by the fact that his people were happy with his rule. His leadership experience had allowed him to establish his authority and rule, and thus made him the ideal person to be the caliph. The transfer of the power of caliphate from his son Hassan Ibn Ali to Muawiyah in the year 41 AH brought an end to the Rashidun Caliphate era, which was considered to be the first period of the Muslim state rule after the death of Prophet Muhammad.

As mentioned earlier, Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan was a companion of the Prophet and served as the Prophet's scribe, recording ahadith of the Prophet. He was well respected by other companions of the Prophet including Caliph Ali. Therefore, according to the Sunnah followers (Sunnis), he was a noble and virtuous person.

After Muawiyah took the helm of the new caliphate in 661 CE, he started to reunite the caliphate that had fragmented earlier. This year thus came to be known in Islamic history as the year of unity. Most Islamic historians agree that this brought calmness back to the Islamic Empire as all Muslims had agreed to reunite under the authority of one caliph. Hassan Ibn Ali is credited for his reconciliation efforts with Muawiyah.

Muawiyah was known to be politically astute and had a knack for leading his people, who in turn were very fond of him. Once, during his time as a caliph, he received a letter from Abdullah Ibn Zubair, son of Zubair Ibn Awwam and one of the Prophet's companions, from Makkah. Abdullah Ibn Zubair owned property that adjoined Muawiyah's property in Makkah. In the letter, Abdullah Ibn Zubair addressed Muawiyah with his name without prefacing it with his title of caliph. The letter complained harshly about

Muawiyah's workers on the property, who supposedly caused various troubles to Abdullah Ibn Zubair. He threatened further action if Muawiyah did not stop this disturbance. On receiving the letter, Muawiyah gave the letter to his son Yazeed and asked him for his opinion. As this was a letter from a person rebuking the caliph, Yazeed said that if he was the caliph in place of Muawiyah, he would prepare an army that would stretch from the lands of Syria to Makkah and would go after Abdullah Ibn Zubair to punish him for the rude manner in which he had addressed Muawiyah. On this, Muawiyah smiled and advised his son that leading people needed more patience and prudence. Therefore, Muawiyah responded to Abdullah respectfully in a letter that addressed Abdullah as the "Son of the Disciple (Companion) of Prophet" and signed it as "Muawiyah, the Son of the Slave of Allah". In the letter, Muawiyah apologized for the troubles that his workers had caused to Abdullah and gifted the property to Abdullah Ibn Zubair along with his workers. A few days later, Abdullah Ibn Zubair wrote back to Muawiyah and, unlike the first letter, Abdullah addressed Muawiyah properly with the title of 'Caliph' and apologized to him for the rude manner in which he had written earlier. Muawiyah showed this to Yazeed as a lesson in how to lead people.

Syria (also called Ash-Sham) was one of the most important states in the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire for its closeness to the Holy Land (Jerusalem), as well as for its ancient history, which was one of the civilization centers of that Empire. Although the borders of Syria were not the same as the Syria of today, Damascus was considered the main city. Even before the Muslim rule, the Romans made Damascus one of the primary hubs in the region. Muawiyah worked hard to preserve the history of the city. Later, he married someone that hailed from a Yemeni tribe that was settled in Damascus. It was from that marriage that his son, Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah, was born.

Once the Banu Umayyah Caliphate was established, Muawiyah ruled its people and its areas that stretched from the eastern regions of Iraq and Persia to the western parts that included Egypt and parts of North Africa. He, therefore, thought it prudent to establish Damascus as the capital city.

Sunni Scholars recognize Muawiyah as the best of the kings (not caliph) of Muslims, because the caliphs before him were the successors of Prophethood and were selected through a process of mutual consultation amongst the learned and scholarly Muslims. Muawiyah on the other hand broke that tradition and appointed his son as the king triggering a tradition of appointing successors from their own family. He was, therefore, considered as the first of Islamic kings.

10.1 Military Expeditions to Tunisia, Sicily, and Constantinople

As was discussed earlier, Caliph Ali's reign was marred by numerous internal battles and struggles. The expansion of the Muslim territories, which started during the Prophet's time and continued after his death, slowed down considerably during Caliph Ali's time. Once Muawiyah became the caliph and the Muslims became united, these military expeditions and expansions started once again. In the first year of his rule in 661 CE, Muawiyah carried out sixteen military campaigns against the Byzantine Empire. For one of them, Muawiyah sent a man named Muawiyah Ibn Hudaij to lead the African Campaign along with Abdullah Ibn Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, Abdullah Ibn Az-Zubair [\[88\]](#) , Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan [\[89\]](#) and others from the nobles of the Quraish. This is when the Roman Emperor sent a large fleet of soldiers to Africa. Muawiyah then sent Ibn Hudaij with reinforcements to help his forces take Sousse (a city in Tunisia) and Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan conquered the city of Jalola (located near Kairouan, a city in Tunisia). Muawiyah also used his naval forces to conquer Sicily (Italy). During the time the Muslim armies were in Sicily, they allied with the Barbarians against the Romans. This strengthened the Muslim hold against the Roman threat.

The Seven Year War of Constantinople

With the aforementioned conquests, Muslim forces had come quite close to the city of Constantinople, which was the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire. In the year 667 CE, Caliph Muawiyah sent brigades from his army to inspect ways to reach and conquer Constantinople. Finally, in the year 669 CE, he put the city under siege. However, a few months later the spread of smallpox within the Muslim army, along with the harsh winter, made it difficult for him to continue the siege. However, the first siege had allowed the Muslims to take other smaller cities that were on the way to Constantinople from the Byzantine Empire that included the island of Arwad. The city of Arwad was called Kzaikos in European sources and is located close to Constantinople. Once conquered, this city allowed Muawiyah's forces to use it as a staging location for subsequent attempts to take Constantinople.

After a few years, Caliph Muawiyah prepared a much larger army fleet than last time and sent it again to Constantinople for a second siege. This second attempt is known as the Seven Year War of Constantinople. Better prepared this time, the army had a stronghold in front of the city walls and held their siege for seven years. The island of Kzaikos, captured during the first siege, was used as a staging ground to attack the city and the Byzantine armies protecting the city. Many smaller-scale battles continued for seven years. However, they continued their siege of the strong city. During the siege of the city, Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah (the son of the Caliph Muawiyah) became known for his leadership of the Muslim army that had besieged Constantinople.

The caliph's forces were unable to take the city mainly because of the strong defense that the Byzantine army was able to put up against the Muslim forces. These defenses included large stonewalls that protected the city. The Byzantine army's use of advanced artillery, and the geographical location of the city, gave the Byzantines an advantage over the invading forces. Furthermore, the Muslims' inexperience in besieging cities on the coast, along with harsh weather conditions, did not favor Muawiyah's forces. The Byzantine navy fleet also employed lethal weapons to repel the Muslim army attacks. They used a weapon called the "Greek Fire", which comprised of a mixture of chemicals and fire that they threw at the opposing forces thus repelling the attacks.

10.2 Transfer of Power to Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah

Muawiyah had begun contemplating passing the caliphate to his son Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah when Mugheerah Ibn Shauba initially introduced this idea to Muawiyah. By this time, most of the prominent companions of the Prophet had passed away. Muawiyah became interested in this idea primarily because all the companions had died and most of the newly conquered areas that had come under Muslim control had commanders and leaders from Banu Umayyah. Having seen firsthand the disunity caused by the Battle of Camel and Siffeen, Muawiyah feared another revolt and disunity and therefore thought of Yazeed as a potential candidate to continue his legacy and to keep the Muslims united under the command and control structure that he had put in place within his caliphate. Besides, by this time, Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah had become known for his leadership of the Muslim army that had earlier besieged Constantinople, a Byzantine stronghold and capital, for many months. Muawiyah was also confident that Yazeed would have support, especially from the people of Syria, which was a critical part of the Muslim caliphate.

Muawiyah recognized that this decision had the potential to face stiff resistance because it was against the spirit of the caliphate and was going to set the wrong precedent of choosing Muslim leadership. However, after numerous consultations, Muawiyah saw no other option but to appoint Yazeed as the leader of the Muslims after him. To prevent any future conflicts, Muawiyah asked the people to give their pledge to Yazeed while he was living. Although this was unprecedented, Muawiyah made an impassioned speech and the people in Syria pledged allegiance to Yazeed as the next leader of the Muslims after the death of Muawiyah.

Muawiyah Passes Away

In Muawiyah's last days in 60 AH (680 CE), his son Yazeed was absent, so he called in Ad-Dahik Ibn Qais Al-Fehri (his chief of police) and Muslim Ibn Uqbah (an army leader, later to be known in the battle of Al-Harra with Yazeed as Caliph). He then recommended and informed them to instruct Yazeed to take care of the people of Iraq, Syria, and Hejaz as these lands were under Muslim control. Muawiyah passed away in the year 60 AH in Damascus and was buried between Bab Al-Jabiya and Bab Al-Sagheer, which are two of the eight ancient city gates of the city of Damascus.

After his death, people remembered Muawiyah both in good and bad terms. As was mentioned earlier, the Prophet had chosen him as his scribe for writing the revelations and also said special prayers for him. He had many accomplishments in expanding the Muslim frontiers. The lands that Muawiyah conquered eventually produced many scholars that included personalities such as Bukhari, Muslim, Tirmidhi, Tabari, and many others. However, although Muawiyah was quite liked by his people, there were many who disliked him as well. They were mostly those who had lost relatives and close family members in the battle of Siffeen. One such example was that of Miswar Ibn Kharama, who was known to be one of the youngest companions of the Prophet. Miswar would not let go of any opportunity to speak ill about Muawiyah. Muawiyah knew about this, so one day he called Miswar and asked him to express his objections to Muawiyah directly. Miswar did not hesitate to express his feelings. Muawiyah then acknowledged them and asked Miswar if he (Miswar) had any sins that required forgiveness from Allah. When Miswar replied in the affirmative, he asked him why Miswar thought that he was more worthy to have his sins forgiven than Muawiyah. Muawiyah also reminded him of his many accomplishments that included spreading Islam to remote areas of the world and how those areas then produced renowned Islamic scholars. These areas included the lands of present-day Turkey, Cyprus, Egypt, and others. Muawiyah also said that he never had the option to choose between Allah and something else and so he only chose Allah, meaning that he did not let other things cloud the light of his faith. Muawiyah then continued to ask Miswar whether he still thought that Muawiyah was not worthy enough to

have his sins forgiven. On hearing this, Miswar changed his opinion about Muawiyah and then never spoke ill of him again.

Muawiyah, Caliph Ali, and People's Opinions of them

While Muawiyah is mentioned as good in Sunni history books, Shiites have an opposing view. Historical accounts from many of the Shia books highlight feelings of enmity between Muawiyah and Caliph Ali. However, there are many incidents recorded authentically as hadith and through narrations of reliable people which state that they both respected each other. For example, after the Battles of Camel and Siffeen, a number of people in Syria had started cursing Caliph Ali. This especially included those who had lost their relatives and family members in the battles. This was painful for Muawiyah because he understood Caliph Ali's position in Islam and the special treatment given to Caliph Ali by the Prophet. Being close to the people of Syria, he found it difficult to openly provide words of such support, but he used every opportunity to elevate Caliph Ali's status. In one example, Saad Ibn Abi Waqas, who was also one of the prominent companions of the Prophet, came to a meeting where Muawiyah was sitting with a number of prominent Syrians. Muawiyah asked Saad for the reasons that he liked 'Abu-Turab', which was the nickname the Prophet had given to Caliph Ali (Ali appreciated the title as the Prophet addressed him with it with love). Therefore, when posing that question to Saad, Muawiyah purposely used the most beloved title for Ali. On this, Saad responded by saying that he found it unbecoming to curse a person who had possessed three major virtues. Saad further added that if Saad had even one of those virtues, he would consider himself blessed. Muawiyah then asked Saad about the virtues of Caliph Ali even though he already knew them; he wanted to impress the topic on the people of Syria who were sitting in his company. Saad responded that in the battle of Tabuk, the Prophet had left Ali in Madinah. This caused the hypocrites in Madinah to start saying that had Ali been courageous and good, the Prophet would have taken him along to the battle and not left him in Madinah with the women, the weak, and children. This was quite painful for Ali to hear so he chased the army until he caught up with the Prophet and expressed his remorse for being left

behind in the city. The Prophet responded that he wished Ali to be like Prophet Harun (Aaron) whom Prophet Moses left behind with his people (to handle their affairs) when Prophet Moses went to visit Allah for forty days. Therefore, the Prophet likened Ali to his most trusted advisor, similar to how Prophet Moses had appointed Harun to stay with his people.

Saad then proceeded to give the second example in which he mentioned that he had heard the Prophet say during the day of Khaibar (section 5.5) that Ali loved Allah and Allah loved him back. Finally, Saad also mentioned that before his death, the Prophet had called on a few people that included Fatima, Ali, Hassan, and Hussein, and named them as his family (based on the verse of the Quran.)

This incident made Muawiyah happy as he was able to remind the Syrians about Caliph Ali's special virtues and his place in Islam.

10.3 The Killing of Hussein Ibn Ali

Yazeed thus became the second caliph from Banu Umayyah in 60 AH (680 CE). Once again, this appointment split the Muslim nation because Yazeed's appointment by his father was seen to be contrary to the principles of the Islamic caliphate. The primary contention was that a caliph should be selected from amongst a 'shura' (advisory council) of learned people rather than on the rules of inheritance and kinship, which was the norm in other empires such as those of the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires. Therefore, a number of prominent companions from the Prophet's time rejected his appointment and refused to give their pledge to Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah. These people included:

- Hussein Ibn Ali (younger son of Caliph Ali)
- Abdur-Rahman Ibn Abu Bakr (son of Caliph Abu Bakr)
- Abdullah Ibn Umar Al-Khattab (son of Caliph Umar)
- Abdullah Ibn Zubair (son of Zubair Ibn Awwam and Asmaa bint Abu Bakr. Zubair was a companion of the Prophet, and Asmaa was the daughter of Caliph Abu Bakr)

- Asmaa bint Abu Bakr (daughter of Caliph Abu Bakr and mother of Abdullah Ibn Zubair)

As was mentioned earlier, Abdullah Ibn Saba, who had created the rift between Muslims starting from Caliph Uthman's time, was able to elevate Caliph Ali and his family to the extent of assigning divinity to them. Caliph Ali and his family, therefore, were revered in Kufah and the nearby areas. On hearing that Hussein Ibn Ali had rejected the appointment of Yazeed, the people of Kufah sent letters to him in Madinah supporting him in his cause and invited him to come to Kufah so they could give him the pledge for the caliphate instead of Yazeed. To confirm the truth of this news and to assess the extent of his support, Hussein Ibn Ali sent his cousin Muslim Ibn Aqeel Ibn Abu-Talib (Caliph Al-Ibn Abu-Talib's nephew) to Kufah to assess the situation.

Once Muslim Ibn Aqeel arrived in Kufah, he was welcomed by the people of Kufah. Knowing that he was representing Hussein Ibn Ali, around six thousand people gave him their pledge. Seeing this level of confidence from the people of Kufah, Muslim Ibn Aqeel sent this news back to Hussein Ibn Ali, who was in Madinah. After receiving the message, Hussein decided to leave Madinah to join his supporters in Kufah. The prominent companions of the Prophet tried to dissuade him from this trip because they feared that with Hussein going against Yazeed's rule, they could make Yazeed retaliate against Hussein in Kufah. Abdullah Ibn Umar, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, and Abdullah Ibn Zubair were some of those companions who tried to stop Hussein from taking this trip. Abdullah Ibn Zubair went as far as reminding Hussein that as the people of Kufah killed his father (Caliph Ali) and they could not be trusted [\[90\]](#) . However, this did not stop Hussein and he set out for Kufah in 680 CE.

While Hussein was on his way, Yazeed found out about his intentions, and contacted many people from the Banu Hashim clan telling them to dissuade Hussein Ibn Ali from going to Kufah. When he learned that Hussein could not be stopped from proceeding to Kufah and from rebelling against his caliphate, he contacted the governor of Kufah, Nauman Ibn Basheer Al-Ansari, to stop the people in Kufah from supporting Hussein Ibn Ali.

However, people continued rallying for Hussein in Kufah. This caused Yazeed to dismiss Nauman Ibn Basheer Al-Ansari from his position of governor, accusing him of being too soft in his tactics of putting down the rebellion. He then appointed Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad as the governor of Kufah, expecting him to deal with the rebels harshly.

Obaidullah's challenge was twofold. He not only had to put down the rebellion within Kufah but also had to stop Hussein from arriving there. He therefore prepared an army and sent it to stop Hussein from continuing toward Kufah. On learning that Obaidullah had mobilized an army to stop Hussein Ibn Ali, his supporters put a siege on Obaidullah's house. As hostilities escalated and Obaidullah feared for his life, he threatened them, falsely, that he had requested a large force from Syria to put down the rebellion. This tactic worked, and most of Hussein's supporters in Kufah dispersed and abandoned their support for Hussein. Only thirty people remained with Muslim Ibn Aqeel, who was acting as Hussein's representative in Kufah. This was a major blow to Hussein Ibn Ali as his supporters in Kufah abandoned him due to the threats.

Obaidullah's forces then surrounded the house of Muslim Ibn Aqeel. Muslim surrendered and asked for a reprieve to be able to write to Hussein about the changing situation within the city, especially as it related to people abandoning their support for Hussein. After getting permission, he wrote a letter to Hussein warning him of Obaidullah's army and asking him to return to Madinah as people of Kufah had turned back on their earlier pledges. Obaidullah then killed Muslim Ibn Aqeel.

Another contingent of Obaidullah's forces was en route to stop Hussein in its tracks from approaching Kufah. His forces, as well as Hussein's group of supporters, rendezvoused at Karbala, ninety kilometers south of Baghdad. While at Karbala, Hussein received Muslim Ibn Aqeel's letter informing him of the situation. On discovering that his support in Kufah had dissipated, Hussein asked the leader of Obaidullah's forces, Umar Ibn Saad Ibn Abi Waqas (son of the prominent Prophet's companion Saad Ibn Abi Waqas), to grant him one of three things. The first was to let him return to Madinah; the second was to let Hussein pass to other lands where he could join the Islamic armies in their ongoing military missions against the

Byzantine Empire; and his third request was for Hussein to be taken to Yazeed and to let Yazeed decide his future.

Umar Ibn Saad Ibn Abi Waqas then sent a letter to Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad with Hussein's three proposals. In the meantime, however, a man by the name of Shemr Ibn Dhil-Jawshan refused to enter such negotiations and asked Hussein to surrender to Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad's forces. However, Hussein refused to submit to the rule of Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad. A fight ensued on the day of Ashoora (10th Muharram of the Islamic calendar) in which a soldier of Obaidullah, named Hussein Ibn Numair, struck Hussein Ibn Ali with an arrow that became lodged in his throat. Hussein Ibn Ali tried to stop the bleeding and invoked Allah for retribution against those who had plotted to kill him. At this time, Shemr ordered his forces to kill Hussein Ibn Ali. A soldier by the name of Sinan Ibn Anas An-Nakhei then approached Hussein and beheaded him [\[91\]](#).

Obaidullah's forces then took Hussein's body to Kufah. The people of Kufah, who had earlier abandoned their support for him, started mourning and lamenting in large numbers. These supporters primarily comprised of the 'Shiat Ali' (supporters of Ali) group. They not only blamed Yazeed for Hussein's murder, but also accused Muawiyah (Yazeed's father) of poisoning Caliph Hassan. This incident further cemented their enmity and hatred toward Banu Umayyah. Historians also note that their laments were not simply for the murder of Hussein Ibn Ali but also to blame themselves for not persevering in their support to Hussein. They started to lament that if they had continued their support for Hussein, Obaidullah would not have been able to kill Hussein. This was reminded to them when they were shown all the letters that they had written to Hussein to pledge their support, which they had later retracted. Zainab bint Ali (Caliph Ali's daughter) and Ali Ibn Hussein Zainul Abdin blamed the people of Kufah for their betrayal of Hussein Ibn Ali and held them responsible for his murder.

When Yazeed received the message of Hussein Ibn Ali's assassination, he visibly became quite upset. He cursed Obaidullah by saying that he only wanted Obaidullah to stop Hussein from reaching Kufah but not to kill him. This in turn upset Obaidullah because he was expecting a reward from Yazeed for killing Hussein. After the killing of Hussein, Obaidullah

escorted the survivors from Hussein's group and took them to Yazeed who gave them a lot of respect and then sent them to Madinah.

This is where the Sunnis and Shiites differ on the account of Yazeed's character. Shiites accuse Yazeed for his hatred of Caliph Ali and Prophet Muhammad because, according to them, they accuse him of avenging the deaths of members of his clan (Banu Umayyah) from Banu Hashim. As was mentioned earlier, on the day of the Battle of Badr, a number of renowned personalities from Banu Umayyah were killed at the hands of Banu Hashim. The people from Banu Umayyah who were killed that day include Utbah (Yazeed's grandfather), Shaybah (Yazeed's grandfather's brother), and Waleed Ibn Utbah (Yazeed's uncle). The Shiites, therefore, regard him as a hypocrite and non-believer and curse him with the worst language.

Sunnis, on the other hand, do not condemn Yazeed in the same spirit as Shiites. For example, Ibn Taymiyaah mentioned in his book Majmoo al-Fataawa (3/410-413) that although Yazeed had sent his army to stop Hussein, he did not issue the orders to kill him. Yazeed was also remorseful when he came to know about Hussein Ibn Ali's death. Sunnis believe that he was a Muslim who had made certain mistakes in his life but the killing of Hussein was not something that Yazeed had planned or rejoiced [\[92\]](#) .

Both Sunnis and Shiites agree, however, that Hussein Ibn Ali died as a martyr on the day of Ashoora. As martyrdom in Islam (to die for the service of Islam) is considered an honor, Sunnis regard his martyrdom similar to the deaths of other companions of the Prophet who died as martyrs as well. Amongst the noble companions of the Prophet who were martyred are his father Caliph Ali Ibn Abu-Talib, Hamzah Ibn Abdul-Muttalib, Caliph Umar, Caliph Uthman, and many others. As the martyrdom of many of them also occurred during the Prophet's time, along with the fact that he did not mourn their martyrdom, Sunnis believe it out of line to mourn such events and to mourn with visible expressions. This is in line with the Prophet's teaching that had advised Muslims to exercise patience and to maintain a composed demeanor instead in such calamities. This was proven when the Prophet's own son Ibrahim was dying and the Prophet's eyes filled with tears. Abdur-Rahman Ibn Awf asked him why he was weeping when he had forbidden people to weep. The Prophet responded by saying that although

he did not forbid weeping, he did forbid two foolish and evil kinds of voices. One of them was the voice emitted during times of entertainment and playing the flutes of Satan, and the other was the voices emitted during times of calamity that include scratching the face and tearing garments and screaming [\[93\]](#) .

In his memory, the Shiites built a shrine near Karbala, Iraq. It is referred to as the “Imam Hussein Shrine” and Shiites flock there during the first ten days of the Islamic month of Muharram to commemorate his death. The shrine is a mosque as well as a place that holds the grave of Hussein Ibn Ali. It is worth noting that there have been many scholarly articles that dispute the exact location of his body; different accounts mention that his body was taken to Egypt, Syria, or Iraq. The reason for mentioning Syria is that, after his killing, Obaidullah took his body to Yazid in Syria.

10.4 Banu Umayyah’s Attack on Madinah

As mentioned earlier, a number of companions of the Prophet had not pledged allegiance to Yazid’s rule. Among them was Abdullah Ibn Zubair, who was the son of two renowned personalities of Islam, namely Zubair Ibn Awwam and Asmah bint Abu Bakr. After Hussein Ibn Ali’s death in 680 CE, Abdullah Ibn Zubair remained defiant to the rule of Yazid and headed toward Makkah. Being the grandson of the Prophet, Hussein Ibn Ali enjoyed wide-ranging support amongst the people of Makkah. In Makkah, Abdullah Ibn Zubair made an emotional speech defying the rule of Yazid. Thereafter, the people of Makkah pledged support to Abdullah Ibn Zubair as their next caliph.

Abdullah was able to obtain a stronghold over many cities of Arabia including parts of Iraq. He also appointed his brother Musaab Ibn Zubair as the governor of Iraq.

The killing of Hussein Ibn Ali and those that were with him made people of the Hejaz region (Makkah and Madinah) turn against Yazid specifically and the Banu Umayyah’s rule in general. Yazid started losing popularity in

Hejaz as word spread about his indulgence in various un-Islamic practices, such as drinking and listening to music, singers, and so on. They were also disappointed with Yazeed for not punishing Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad for the killing of Imam [\[94\]](#) Hussein Ibn Ali.

In Madinah, people had started to turn against Banu Umayyah as well. On one occasion, about one thousand people from Banu Umayyah gathered at Marwan Ibn Hakam's house. Disgruntled with Banu Umayyah, the people of Madinah laid a siege on Banu Umayyah. When Yazeed (the caliph and also from Banu Umayyah) learned about this, he became furious and sent Muslim Ibn Uqbah with an army of more than ten thousand soldiers to Madinah, demanding a surrender and pledge of allegiance to Yazeed or else threatening them to face battle with Muslim Ibn Uqbah's forces. Yazeed authorized Muslim Ibn Uqbah for an all-out war against the people of Madinah should they not give their pledge to Yazeed's rule.

Yazeed also asked Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad to go to Makkah to get them to support the Banu Umayyah caliphate. However, as Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad was upset with Yazeed for not giving him enough credit for killing Hussein Ibn Ali, he declined to go to Makkah and participate in another bloodbath in the noble city. The fact that his mother, Marjanah, had also severely rebuked him for killing Hussein Ibn Ali also tempered his political activities.

On reaching Madinah in 63 AH, Muslim Ibn Uqbah entered the town of Harrah and waged an all-out war against the people of Madinah. This battle, also referred to as the Battle of Harrah, resulted in the deaths of many nobles of Madinah after which the people of Madinah surrendered and accepted Yazeed as their leader and caliph. History notes that Muslim Ibn Uqbah carried out numerous atrocities against the people of Madinah during these three days. This included killing numerous people from Ansar of Madinah and the Quraish, families of the Prophet's companions, desecration of women and their honor, and other crimes. According to Ibn Katheer [\[95\]](#), many Sunni scholars allow the cursing of Yazeed because of the operation he had authorized against the people of Madinah. However, other Sunni scholars prohibit his cursing because of not maligning the reputation of his father, who as described earlier, was a noble companion of

the Prophet and served in numerous Islamic causes. Sunni scholars further state that although Yazeed had committed grave sins, he was not an apostate as many from the Shiite (Shia) have labeled him. This is in accordance to the Quranic injunction that Allah may forgive any sin except ‘shirk’ (associating others in His worship) or apostasy.

After being victorious in Madinah, Muslim Ibn Uqbah proceeded to Makkah, where Abdullah Ibn Zubair, too, had refused to accept Yazeed as the caliph. However, on the way to Makkah, Muslim Ibn Uqbah died and, on earlier instructions from Yazeed, appointed Hussein Ibn Numair as the commander of the army [\[96\]](#) . Once Hussein Ibn Numair reached Makkah, he sieged the city of Makkah and attacked it by installing catapults around the city.

The siege continued for a few days, accompanied by numerous skirmishes between the forces of Hussein Ibn Numair and Abdullah Ibn Zubair. Meanwhile, Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah's died unexpectedly in the town of Huwareen, near Homs, Syria. Once Hussein Ibn Numair learned of this, he lifted the siege and left Madinah. Before leaving Madinah, he offered to give Abdullah Ibn Zubair his pledge as the caliph of the Muslims on the condition that Abdullah Ibn Zubair accompany him to Syria, where he would convince the Syrians to also give their pledge to Abdullah Ibn Zubair as their next caliph. Hussein Ibn Numair made the offer considering that Yazeed had died and the Muslims needed another caliph and also there was no strong successor to Yazeed. However, Abdullah Ibn Zubair did not trust Hussein Ibn Numair and declined the offer.

After these events, a number of people from Banu Umayyah moved to Damascus, Syria. Among them were Marwan Al-Hakam (mentioned earlier) and his son Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan. Both of them later became leaders of the Muslims.

10.5 Caliphate Transitions

When Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah passed away in Syria, his son Muawiyah Ibn Yazeed was only twenty years old, and Yazeed had already appointed him as heir to his throne. This was again done against Islamic teachings where a ruler had not taken the advice of a 'Shura' to select a leader the way it had happened under Caliph Rashidun. Although people gave their pledge to Muawiyah Ibn Yazeed, making him the third Banu Umayyah caliph, he was not interested in the caliphate and later turned it down. In addition, within a few days of turning down the caliphate, he became sick and died.

By this time, people in Iraq, especially in Kufah, had started to realize their mistake of turning their backs on Imam Hussein Ibn Ali. They were quite ashamed and sorrowful and in that process they rejected Obaidullah's leadership (and Yazeed's) and gave their pledge to the caliphate to Abdullah Ibn Zubair. Abdullah Ibn Zubair had accompanied Hussein Ibn Ali in Karbala, and after his killing had moved to Makkah. When in Makkah, he had rejected Yazeed's rule and assumed the role of caliph, leading Muslims in Hejaz (Makkah and Madinah) and Iraq. The ruler in Egypt, too, had pledged his support to Abdullah Ibn Zubair as caliph. As Muawiyah Ibn Yazeed had passed away, and due to the lack of any viable leader, many in Syria also began to gradually accept Abdullah Ibn Zubair's leadership. However, on the insistence of Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad (whose forces had killed Hussein Ibn Ali), Hussein Ibn Numair and others, Marwan Ibn Hakam rebelled from that rule and became the fourth caliph from Banu Umayyah. As mentioned earlier, Hussein Ibn Numair had laid siege to Makkah and asked Abdullah Ibn Zubair to come to Syria so he could get the people of Syria to pledge their support. However, as Abdullah had refused, he now pressured Marwan Ibn Hakam to rebel from Abdullah's rule.

Before Marwan declared himself as the caliph in Syria, talks were rife about Khalid Ibn Yazeed (Yazeed's other son) to take over the caliphate. In anticipation of that, Marwan had married Khalid's mother to bring the two families together and to better his chances of becoming the caliph himself. However, soon after, Marwan rebelled, appointing himself as caliph in Syria. To prevent any uprising, he appointed Khalid Ibn Yazeed as his heir apparent.

Once Marwan stabilized his rule as the fourth caliph from Banu Umayyah, he set his sights on appointing his son, Abdul-Malik, as the heir apparent. Therefore, within public circles, he started to defame Khalid Ibn Yazeed. Later, he conspired and then appointed Abdul-Malik as his heir apparent. However, as he still felt threatened by Khalid Ibn Yazeed, he started planning to kill Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah. As Khalid Ibn Yazeed came to know about this, he complained to his mother who was also Marwan's wife. She then conspired with her maids and slaves and killed Marwan in his sleep by suffocating him with a pillow.

After his death, the people of Damascus as well as Egypt gave their pledge for the caliphate to Abdul-Malik, making him the fifth caliph from Banu Umayyah. On becoming caliph, Abdul-Malik was able to discover the cause of his father's (Marwan's) death. He then arrested Khalid's mother and executed her as punishment for her crime.

10.6 Deepening of the Shia/Sunni Rift

Since the death of Hussein Ibn Ali under Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah's reign, the cries of those who were mourning the killing of Hussein Ibn Ali were becoming louder and stronger. As a reminder, Syria was under the caliphate of Marwan Al-Hakam and Hejaz and Iraq were under the caliphate of Abdullah Ibn Zaid, who ruled from Makkah. During these times, a man named Suleman Ibn Surad [\[97\]](#) , from Iraq, was able to rally a large following to avenge the killing of Hussein Ibn Ali. In that pursuit, he led a large army of people toward Syria to demand the Syrian caliph, Marwan, to hand over Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad, whose forces had killed Hussein Ibn Ali. Obaidullah, on the other hand, had become a close confidant of the new caliph, Marwan Al-Hakam. Marwan not only refused Suleman Ibn Surad's demand but also asked the forces of Suleman Ibn Surad to pledge allegiance to his caliphate. With no side showing any signs of backing down, the Iraqi forces (called Iraqueoon) and Syrian forces (called Ash-Shameeoon) clashed in the Battle of Ayn-ul-Wardah. The battle continued for a few days and resulted in the killing of Suleman Ibn Surad. As the battle waged, a few

more Iraqi leaders were killed, after which Rifaah Ibn Shaddad became the leader of the Iraqi forces. However, his forces eventually retreated to Kufah after being defeated by Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad's forces.

It was during this time that Mukhtar Al-Thaqafi (also referred to as Al-Kadhdhab or 'the liar' [98] by Sunni scholars) started another campaign to avenge the death of Hussein Ibn Ali. As Kufah had become a hot bed of the 'Shiat Ali', or the supporters of Ali, he was able to obtain the support of a number of prominent leaders including Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyah, another son of Caliph Ali Ibn Abu-Talib. As Mukhtar continued to become more aggressive and violent toward finding and punishing the killers of Hussein Ibn Ali, his support among the 'Shiat Ali' grew [99]. At one point, Abdullah Ibn Zubair had to change the governors of both Kufah and Basrah. However, Mukhtar and his associates rebelled against the new leadership and on the day of revolution lit fires throughout Kufah along with raising slogans in favor of Hussein Ibn Ali. As matters grew worse, the governor of Kufah fled the city and took refuge in Basrah.

With Kufah and various parts of Iraq under Mukhtar's control, he kept pushing forward with his plans to find and punish the killers of Hussein Ibn Ali. He dispatched an army to fight Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad, the governor who had ordered the killing of Hussein Ibn Ali. After a few days, Obaidullah and his Syrian army fought Mukhtar's Iraqi forces and defeated Obaidullah's forces. Mukhtar's forces then captured three hundred captives from the Syrian army. When they were brought to the commander of Mukhtar's forces, without any regard to the treatment of prisoners, he ordered all to be executed. The commander of Mukhtar's forces died the same day from an illness.

By this time, false rumors spread in Kufah about the defeat of Mukhtar's forces and the killing of his commander. Earlier, the people of Kufah had started to become disenchanted with Mukhtar because of his false claims and promises that he would make to his people. As rumors spread about the defeat of Mukhtar's forces, people in Kufah turned against Mukhtar and held large rallies at which they called Mukhtar a liar. They also accused him of falsely claiming support from Muhammad bin al-Hanafiyah, son of Caliph Ali Ibn Abu-Talib. They accused him of using various schemes and

treacheries with the sole purpose of becoming the governor of Kufah. However, Mukhtar had his supporters as well, and this resulted in the people of Kufah splitting into two groups. A civil war broke out in the city of Kufah between those two groups that continued for many months.

Despite the war in Kufah, Mukhtar continued his pursuit for Hussein Ibn Ali's killers because he had sensed the emotional value of this cause. His spies were then able to penetrate the city of Basrah and found the hideout of Shemr Ibn Dhil-Jawshan, who was one of the deputies of Obaidullah's forces that had killed Hussein. On finding him, they eventually killed him without any regard of the rule of the caliphate. Having declared this as a major victory, Mukhtar ordered his followers to pursue and arrest everyone who was in any way associated with Hussein's killers. According to Ibn Katheer [\[100\]](#) , a bloodbath followed in Kufah in which Mukhtar's forces (comprising of 'Shiat Ali') executed people en masse in the most heinous of ways without any regard to the rule of law.

Mukhtar then turned to kill Umar Ibn Saad Ibn Abi Waqas, who, as mentioned earlier, was the leader of the forces that Obaidullah had sent to stop Hussein Ibn Ali from advancing into Kufah. Mukhtar disregarded the pact that he had signed earlier with him and this shocked Umar. In his rage for the murder of Hussein, Mukhtar then killed Umar, along with his son, and after the killing he is known to have shouted that if he would kill every person from the clan of Quraish, that would not compensate even the loss of the fingertips of Hussein Ibn Ali.

This is another area where Sunnis greatly differ from Shiites. Sunni scholars agree that Hussein's killers should have been punished appropriately, but Mukhtar's extreme and brutal actions in punishing people en masse with utmost brutality violated all Islamic codes and ethics. Furthermore, this extreme stance led his followers (Shiat Ali) to adopt new religious practices that are against the basic code of Islam. For example, in his book "Devil's Deception", Ibn Al-Jawzee mentions that various practices such as drawing pictures of Imams, mourning in loud voices, building tombs for those who they respect, and beating and self-flagellation are all against the Sunnah of the Prophet that Sunnis believe in. With this group (Shiat Ali) adopting

religious practices that went against Islam, they split into another sect and were called 'Shia' (from the term 'Shiat Ali') or 'Shiites' in English.

The aforementioned events make it clear that by this time, the Muslims were divided into three factions. Syria and Egypt were under the control of Banu Umayyah (under Caliph Marwan and then under his son Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan). Abdullah Ibn Zubair, on the other hand, was the caliph in the area of Hejaz (Makkah and Madinah), whereas Mukhtar and his Shiite (Shia) forces controlled most of Iraq. Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan was still trying to get Abdullah Ibn Zubair to pledge his allegiance to him to unify the caliphate. He sent his forces to Madinah to a place called Wadi-ul-Qura in an attempt to wrestle Madinah out of Abdullah's control. Mukhtar, on the other hand, planned a scheme to oust Abdullah Ibn Zubair as well. Unbeknownst to his confidants, Mukhtar secretly sent Abdullah a message in which he expressed his willingness to give his pledge to Abdullah for the caliphate. However, wary of Mukhtar's reputation as a schemer and a liar in the Arabian Peninsula, Abdullah Ibn Zubair was quite careful in accepting any offers. Mukhtar then sent his forces to Madinah as well. Once Mukhtar's forces arrived, Abdullah's commander came to know about Mukhtar's plans to take over Madinah. He fought and killed many of Mukhtar's forces thus foiling Mukhtar's plans to take Madinah from Abdullah.

Back in Kufah, Mukhtar prepared another force toward Syria to kill Obaidullah Ibn Ziyad and Hussein Ibn Numair. In a battle, Mukhtar's forces were able to kill both of them on the tenth day of Muharram, the day of Ashoora—the day that both had killed Hussein Ibn Ali.

However, by this time, Abdullah Ibn Zubair had sent his brother, Musaab Ibn Zubair, to handle the affairs of Basrah that had gotten out of hand and to launch a campaign against Mukhtar. The people of Kufah too, started revolting against Mukhtar as his lies started to become apparent to them. They also started doubting his religious beliefs as he started to claim that angel Jibraeel (Gabriel) would bring him revelation. Many joined Musaab on the campaign to Kufah to fight and remove Mukhtar from power. As the fight started, Mukhtar was overcome by Abdullah Ibn Zubair's forces and his wife was killed. She was the daughter of Nauman Ibn Basheer, who

earlier was the governor of Kufah. In a continuing battle, Mukhtar was ultimately killed, and Kufah along with Basrah returned to the caliphate of Abdullah Ibn Zubair.

Needless to say that while Sunni scholars remember Mukhtar as a ‘liar’, as was mentioned earlier, the Shiites regard Mukhtar al-Thaqafi as a hero who fought for the love of Hussein Ibn Ali.

10.7 More About the Shia (Shiite) Religion

Chapter 4 covered some of the basics of the beliefs of Sunnis. As for the Shiites, the cornerstone of the Shiite (Shia) religion is based on the concept of “Imamah”. According to this belief, “Imams” are the true caliphs who are infallible and provide spiritual, religious, political leadership to the Shia masses. Therefore, the Shias base their religious teachings on the actions and speech of their Imams and how they interpreted the Quran. Therefore, they do not believe in the hadith sources as narrated through most of the Prophet’s companions. For Shias, their criteria of religious edicts have to trace back to their specific Imams. For example, in the Twelver sect of Shia, the religious teachings are based on the twelve Imams alone. Only the Zaidiyyah Shias accept hadith similar to the Sunnis.

Based on the life and hadith of the Prophet, Sunnis, on the other hand believe that no human being is infallible. The Prophet mentioned in his hadith that a man is bound to make mistakes but the best of those who make mistakes are the ones who repent [\[101\]](#) . Similarly, the Quran in a few places mildly admonish the Prophet for making mistakes. This is specifically mentioned in Surah Abasa when a blind man approached the Prophet, the Prophet frowned on him as he was speaking to others. On this, the Quran verses admonished the Prophet for such a behavior. So, if the Prophet can make a mistake, the Sunnis contend that how can other human beings be infallible? The only area where the Prophets have not made a mistake is in the transmission of the Divine message and that is also mentioned in the Quran [\[102\]](#) .

The Shias, therefore, are critical about the first three caliphs (Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman). They especially blame the first two caliphs for having violated the Divine injunction to appoint Ali as the caliph after Prophet Muhammad's death. The Shiites believe that the Imams are successors of each other.

The term 'Imam' for Sunnis is simply a scholar or a leader and does not have any 'divine' connotations. For example, Sunnis refer to the scholars of hadith such as Bukhari and Muslim as Imam Bukhari and Imam Muslim. Any one that leads prayers can also be referred to as an 'Imam'.

In general, for Sunnis, the religious teachings are based on the Divine word revealed in the Quran and Sunnah (Prophet's traditions and sayings). As for the Prophet, the Quran mentions in the two verses of Surah Najm, “ ***Nor does he speak of (his own) desire.***” and “***it is only a revelation that is revealed .***” These verses are self-explanatory. Sunnis, therefore, give great weight to the authenticity of narrations that authentically trace back to the Prophet.

Differences in Religious Practices

Due to these differences (rulings based on Ahadith versus based on the divinely selected Imams), the two sects have a number of different religious practices. These have also resulted in various Quranic interpretations. Some of those differences are included below. It should be noted that as there are many sects within the Shiites as well, not all of these differences necessarily apply to one sect. Rather, they are collective across the various sects.

- Some of the Shiite scholars (and their followers) believe Quran to be incomplete. These include scholars such as Muhammad Al-Baqir Al-Majlisi Al-Isfahani, Mirza Husain Ibn Muhammad at-Tabarsee, and Muhammad Ibn Yaqub Al-Kulayni. For example, At-Tabarsee wrote in his book “ *Fasl al-Khitaab fee lthbaat Tahreef Kitaab Rabb al-Arbaab* (A Decisive Statement concerning proof of the Alteration of the Lord of Lord's Book i.e. Quran)” in the year 1865 CE that Quran is incomplete and was changed by the Prophet's companions. There

are other books with such claims as well. One of the popular ones is “Al-Kafi” authored by the Shia scholar Al-Kulayni. Some also state that verses related to the “ *Imamate of Ali and the Imams who succeed him* ” have been removed from the Quran. All Sunnis (and some Shiites) on the other hand believe that Quran is complete in its present form. They also attribute the proof of this to the Quranic verse of Surah Hijr, Verse 9, which says, “***Verily We: It is We Who have sent down the zikr (Quran) and surely, We will guard it (from changes or any other corruption).***”

- There are many in Shites who believe Caliph Abu Bakr and Caliph Umar as non-believers primarily because they usurped the caliphate from Ali Ibn Abu-Talib. Many Sunni scholars refer to them as ‘Rafidis’ (Rejecters).
- Many Shiite scholars do not believe in congregation prayers as they believe that Imam must be Masoom (infallible).
- Most of Shiites believe in temporary marriages, where a couple can get married for a short duration (ranging in hours) based on mutual agreement. According to a Shia scholar, Al-Kashani, as mentioned in Tafsir Manhaj As-Sadiqin, Imam Jafar As-Sadiq had mentioned that temporary marriage was a part of his religion and “whoever denies it denies the religion of Islam.” According to Ibn Babawayh Al-Qummi, women who enter into temporary marriage contracts will be forgiven. The Sunnis, however, do not believe in such marriages and consider the bond of marriage as permanent from the perspective that a marriage contract for the most part cannot be valid if the intention is there to break it later.
- Muslims celebrate the day of Ashoora on the 10th day of Muharram according to the Islamic calendar. Based on an authentic hadith of the prophet [103], Sunnis celebrate that day as the one when Allah rescued Prophet Moosa (Moses) and his people from the Pharaoh. This is the day of fasting also for the Jews according to the Jewish calendar. When the Prophet arrived in Madinah the Prophet ordered Muslims to fast that day and one before or after. The Shiites, on the other hand, consider this as a day of mourning when Imam Hussein Ibn Ali was martyred. Many Shiites blame the Banu Umayyah to have prescribed this day of fasting. However, as mentioned earlier,

Sunnis take their religious teachings from the Prophet (hence the term Sunnah, as was covered in section 4.2). In this case, the ruling of fasting is from a hadith of the Prophet as mentioned earlier.

- Some of the Shia sects such as Nusayriyah and Druze take Caliph Ali's status to more extreme and attribute Divinity to him. According to Sunni scholars [\[104\]](#), although most Shias, especially the Twelvers reject attribution of that level of Divinity, they have extended the love of the Ahl-ul-Bayt to a level where they have introduced religious practices that are out of the sphere of Islam. For example, Ali Ibn Hussain Zain Al-Abidin said [\[105\]](#) that just as the Christians went extreme in the love of Jesus and made him son of Allah, some from Muslims would love the Prophet's household so much that "we will have nothing to do with them and they will have nothing to do with us."

Shia Sects

The Shia can be considered as divided into three primary sects as follows:

- 1) Kaisaniyyah
- 2) Imaamiyah
- 3) Zaidiah

Kaisaniyyah is mostly extinct.

Imaamiyah: Most of the Shiites fall under the Imaamiyah category. This category can be further sub-divided in the following two sects:

- 1) *Ithna Asahariyah (also called Twelvers)* – Sunnis refer to them as "Rafidah" or "the ones who reject" and that is because they reject the first two Caliphs Abu Bakr and Umar and the companions of the Prophet. Iran was mostly Sunni until the Safavid Empire during which time it brought the Shia religion to Iran and established the Twelver school of Shia Islam. The Ithna Ashariyah on the other hand constitutes the majority of the Shia and also include the Nusairiya sect, which is also referred to as the Alawites of Syria.

The twelve Imams are all descendants of each other except Hassan and Hussein who are brothers, and sons of Ali Ibn Abu-Talib. The Imams that the Ithna Ashariyah follow are the following:

1. Ali Ibn Abu-Talib
2. Hassan Ibn Ali
3. Hussain Ibn Ali
4. Ali Zain Al-Abideen Ibn al-Hussain
5. Muhammad ibn Ali Zain Al-Abideen
6. Jafar ibn Muhammad Al-Baqir
7. Musa Ibn Jafar Al-Sadiq
8. Ali Ibn Musa al-Kaadam
9. Muhammad Ibn Ali Al-Rida
10. Ali Al-Haadi Ibn Muhammad Al-Jawaad
11. Hassan Al-Askari Ibn Ali al-Haadi
12. Muhammad Ibn Al-Hassan al-Askari

2) *Ismailiyah* – Includes Shiites that are Agha Khanis, Druze, and Bohrahs. They differ from the Twlevers in that they do not recognize Musa Ibn Jafar as the Imam (number seven on the list above). Rather, they accept Ismail Ibn Jafar (brother of Musa) as the Imam.

Zaidiah: They are referred to as “Fivers” as they follow five Imams. They recognize the first four from the list above and add Zaid Ibn Ali as the fifth Imam. In beliefs they are closer to the Sunnis than the other Shia and refute the Twlever religious doctrines.

10.8 Iraq’s Return to Banu Umayyah Control

When Abdul-Malik took over the command of the caliphate in 65 AH as the fifth caliph from Banu Umayyah, two primary events were threatening his rule over the Islamic territories. The first was Abdullah Ibn Zubair’s claim

on the caliphate that was continuing in Makkah with Hejaz and Iraq under his control. The second was the resurfacing of the Khawarij in Iraq that was led by Najdah Ibn Amir.

In an effort to retake Iraq from Abdullah Ibn Zubair's control, Abdul-Malik started to infiltrate his forces in disguise in the city of Kufah. As his forces began to increase, they started to win support for Abdul-Malik's rule. His efforts thus started to pay off and a number of them agreed to abandon Musaab's (Abdullah's governor in Iraq) pledge in favor of Abdul-Malik's caliphate. As he slowly gained an upper hand within the city, Abdul-Malik prepared for a battle against Musaab Ibn Zubair. As Musaab prepared for a counter attack, he was shocked to learn that many of them had abandoned him in favor of Abdul-Malik. This caused him to say that people of Kufah could not be trusted as they had abandoned him the same way they had abandoned Hussein Ibn Ali.

Abdul-Malik then engaged Musaab Ibn Zubair in the Battle of Deir Al-Jathleiq in Iraq. During the battle, when Abdul-Malik's forces had an upper hand, he offered Musaab refuge in his administration. However, Musaab declined, after which he was killed and his forces were defeated. When Abdullah Ibn Zubair was informed of his death, he gave a speech eulogizing him and his services. He, too, blamed the people of Kufah and in his speech stated that they (the people of Kufah) were "people of hypocrisy and betrayal who surrendered and pledged allegiance to him at the lowest price. [\[106\]](#) ”

With Musaab's death, the people of Iraq pledged their allegiance to Abdul-Malik. Iraq, therefore, once again became part of the Banu Umayyah caliphate.

10.9 Hajjaj Ibn Yousuf Al-Thaqafi and the War of Makkah

After taking hold of Iraq, Caliph Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan focused his attention on Hejaz, where people were still faithful to the caliphate of

Abdullah Ibn Zubair. Abdul-Malik then asked one of his confidants, Hajjaj Ibn Yousuf Al-Thaqafi to proceed to Makkah to remove Abdullah Ibn Zubair from power and to reinstate Banu Umayyah's rule over Hejaz. From his perspective, Abdul-Malik could not have assigned a better candidate for this task as Hajjaj had already demonstrated his tough rule in Makkah. Hajjaj was known for his tough governance style and was feared in the region. He belonged to the Banu Thaqif clan that is in Taif in present-day Saudi-Arabia.

Once in Makkah (in the year 72 AH), Hajjaj put Makkah under siege and installed catapults on the mountains surrounding the Kaabah (Masjid Al-Haram). He then started to launch burning rocks from those catapults aiming at Makkah and Abdullah Ibn Zubair and those with him in the Masjid Al-Haram (main Makkah mosque). This siege lasted over six months and resulted in hunger and numerous other hardships for the inhabitants of Makkah. As the situation grew worse, Abdullah Ibn Zubair started to lose support amongst the people of Makkah. Sensing that his siege and attacks on Makkah were working, Hajjaj promised security for all those who abandoned Abdullah's caliphate and pledged their support to Caliph Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan. This worked and made numerous people defect from Abdullah Ibn Zubair's ranks.

A battle then ensued in the year 73 AH in which Abdullah Ibn Zubair was killed. He was seventy-two years old at the time. His mother, Asmaa Bint Abu Bakr, was alive when he died and was more than one hundred years old. She had strongly advised her son not to surrender to Abdul-Malik and to fight until the end, which he did.

This ended Abdullah Ibn Zubair's rule and Makkah came under the rule of Caliph Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan.

After gaining complete control of the situation in Makkah, Hajjaj gathered the people of Makkah, who were grieving Abdullah Ibn Zubair's killing, in the mosque. He delivered a long, historical speech in which he praised Abdullah as a pious person and a nobleman. However, Hajjaj reminded people of the price of disobedience and used the example of Prophet Adam. He mentioned that on disobeying Allah's command, Allah removed Prophet Adam from paradise. In his speech, he said that Prophet Adam was better

than Abdullah and Paradise was better than Kaabah. In this speech, Hajjaj wanted to emphasize that if God could remove Prophet Adam from Paradise for disobedience, then removing Abdullah Ibn Zubair from Makkah for disobeying the caliph was justified as well.

After this victory, Caliph Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan assigned Hajjaj as the governor of Makkah in 74 AH. Due to his reputation of being a strict administrator, this caused another controversy and uproar amongst the people of Makkah. However, he continued as the governor of Makkah. Once he stabilized the situation, he proceeded to Madinah and was able to get people to pledge to him as well. In 75 AH, Caliph Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan came to Madinah and gave a speech from the Prophet's platform. This brought the region of Hejaz back under the fold of the Banu Umayyah Caliphate.

10.10 Hajjaj Governance over Iraq

Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan was able to take control of Iraq by killing Musaab Ibn Zubair and appointing Bishr Ibn Marwan as the governor of Iraq. Although Bishr Ibn Marwan was Abdul-Malik's brother and many did not approve of this appointment, historians say this was able to prevent more instability and bloodshed. However, such stability did not last long as after Bishr passed away, the Khawarij once again surfaced. This was the deviant and extremist group that had initially surfaced in Caliph Ali's time. To tackle the situation of Khawarij, and the dissatisfaction of the people of Kufah (as most of them were part of the 'Shiat Ali' and did not approve of Banu Umayyah), Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan sent many governors to quell the unrest and rebellion. However, no one was able to fully take control of the unrest and instability instigated by the Khawarij.

Due to the brutal tactics of the Khawarij, the soldiers from the caliphate who were fighting them suffered low morale and many started retreating. This made Al-Muhallab Ibn Abi Sufrah (a local leader from Banu Umayyah) angry, and he asked the caliph to send someone with a strong personality to Iraq to quell this ongoing unrest. This is when Abdul-Malik

Ibn Marwan decided to reassign Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf from the governorship of Hejaz to Iraq. Knowing that Hajjaj had proven his mettle for the Banu Umayyah when he ousted Abdullah Ibn Zubair's caliphate from Makkah, and had taken control of Madinah as well, Abdul-Malik saw no better option than Hajjaj to take care of the worsening situation in Iraq. This also seemed to be the right move as Abdul-Malik had started to receive complaints from the people of Madinah about Hajjaj's strict governance style.

On receiving the new assignment in 75 AH, Hajjaj proceeded to Iraq and reached Kufah. There he entered the main mosque in Kufah, ascended to the platform and made a powerful speech with a warning to the Khawarij and all others who were causing the unrest. His statement ("By Allah, I have come here bearing evil, walking its shoes and would reward those who are acting upon it...") became the hallmark of his iron fist rule that he used to subdue the Khawarij and others who were causing the unrest in Iraq. In his speech, he addressed the people of Iraq as "people of hypocrisy and people of ill manners", and warned them harshly from making any mischief and mayhem.

The governance of Hajjaj over Iraq lasted for 20 years (75-95 AH) which ended with his death.

10.11 Hajjaj's Wars with the Khawarij

Section 9.3 mentioned the formation of Khawarij and their dissention from Caliph Ali's forces based on their incorrect interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah. After Caliph Ali defeated them and almost eradicated them, they resurfaced in different parts of Iraq around 695 CE (76 AH). Although initially they had started as one party, they further subdivided into more groups. It had become quite common for their followers to keep breaking from the core group based on personal interpretation of Islamic teachings. Historians note that their number reached more than thirty at one time. The two larger groups from amongst them included the followers of Nafe Ibn Al-Azraq, who were then called 'Azaareqah', and the followers of Ziyad

Ibn Al-Asfar, who were then called ‘As-Safriyah’. Salih Ibn Mussarrih later became the leader of the as-Sufriyyah group of Khawarij.

Both Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan and Hajjaj Ibn Yousuf fought many battles in Iraq to defeat them. One of their primary adversaries from the group was Shabeeb, who was one of the best warriors and horsemen of his time. This conflict first arose when Salih Ibn Mussarrih, who was the leader of the as-Sufriyyah tribe, met with Shabeeb and other Khawarij groups in 76 AH to get them to unite. They both first engaged in a battle with the Caliph’s brother, Muhammad Ibn Marwan. After numerous conflicts near the areas of Sinjar and Al-Mosul in Iraq, Salih was killed. The conflict then continued between Hajjaj and Shabeeb.

During the various battles with Hajjaj’s forces, where Hajjaj’s forces outnumbered Shabeeb’s, the Khawarij defeated them numerous times and forced Hajjaj’s forces to retreat. Toward the end, both Hajjaj, who was known to have defeated the toughest of enemies, and Caliph Abdul-Malik became increasingly worried of Shabeeb’s valor and his ability to fight off forces that were larger and better equipped than his. Shabeeb’s wife, Ghazala, was known to accompany him in battles and was a tough warrior like him. In one of the last battles in which Hajjaj fought, his forces were able to kill Shabeeb’s wife after which Shabeeb was forced to retreat. During his retreat, Shabeeb’s horse trampled and fell in a fast flowing river that resulted in Shabeeb’s drowning and death and the defeat of Khawarij.

The Rebellion of Abdurrahman Ibn Al-Ashath

Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan eventually made Hajjaj the governor of Iraq, Khurasan, Sijistan, and nearby areas. In 80 AH (699 CE), Hajjaj assigned Abdur-Rahman Ibn Al-Ashath as the governor over Sijistan and sent Saeed Ibn Jubair along with him as his financial officer. The area of Sijistan is also referred to as Sistan or Zabulistan in history and covers the present-day areas of southeastern Iran and southwestern Pakistan and Afghanistan. This also includes present-day areas of Makran (Pakistan), Baluchistan (Pakistan), Zahedan (Iran), Zabol (Iran), and Mirabad (Afghanistan).

Once Al-Ashath settled in the area, Hajjaj asked him to lead an army against the King of the Turks, Rutbeel. One of the reasons for the attack was that Rutbeel had killed Hajjaj's men a year earlier. Once Ibn Al-Ashath reached Sistan, he asked for reconciliation with the king against Hajjaj's wishes. Although Ibn Al-Ashath ended up taking a number of cities in the area, this incident caused a lot of animosity between the two. Hajjaj had become upset because Al-Ashath challenged his authority and showed reluctance in following his orders. Ibn Al-Ashath, on the other hand, had a supposedly difficult time in dealing with Hajjaj's oppressive governing style, a sentiment he shared with many other Iraqis.

Eventually, this hostility between the two caused Ibn Al-Ashath to rebel from Hajjaj's rule. Ibn Al-Ashath's forces supported him in this rebellion and gradually, it developed into a full-fledged major rebellion against Hajjaj.

Of the many other rebellions that started in the area of Sijistan against Banu Umayyah, this was one of the strongest. Banu Umayyah's efforts and resources were consumed by putting down rebellions in this province. This rebellion turned into a long war between them. In 81 AH, the people of Basrah rose in rebellion with Al-Ashath and fought Hajjaj on the day of Eid-ul-Adha, where Hajjaj was defeated and he retreated with his forces.

Battle of Dayr Al-Jamajim

In 702 CE (83 AH), the rebellion ignited again and the two forces fought in a conflict that came to be known as the Battle of Dayr Al-Jamajim in an area that was located just outside Kufah on the way to Basrah in Iraq. This conflict had a damaging effect on the history of the Banu Umayyah Caliphate. The war lasted for one hundred days until Hajjaj's forces defeated Al-Ashath. Another battle followed in an area called Maskan, where Al-Ashath was defeated again.

Al-Ashath (along with Saeed Ibn Jubair) then escaped from Iraq and sought refuge in the area of Sijistan. His earlier efforts to reconcile with the king in that area paid off as he was given refuge under the king's rule. On learning that Al-Ashath was hiding with the king, Hajjaj threatened invasion of his areas. The threat worked and the king decided to hand over Al-Ashath to

Hajjaj. This caused Al-Ashath to commit suicide by jumping from the top of the castle where he was hiding. Other historians say that he died under the king's refuge because he had contracted tuberculosis. Saeed Ibn Jubair escaped from Sijistan and remained a fugitive until he was captured in Madinah and sent to Hajjaj in chains. Accusing him of treason, Hajjaj ordered his execution.

The Caliphate of Al-Waleed Ibn Abdul-Malik

In 86 AH, Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan passed away and his son, Al-Waleed Ibn Abdul-Malik, took over the caliphate of Banu Umayyah. Hajjaj Ibn Yousuf was now under the administration of Al-Waleed Ibn Abdul-Malik. Amongst other things, one of the major works undertaken by Caliph Al-Waleed was the construction of the famous mosque in Damascus that is referred to as the 'Umayyad Mosque', or the 'Great Mosque of Damascus'. Al-Waleed constructed the mosque at the location of a Christian basilica, which is rumored to contain the head of John the Baptist. As John is considered a noble figure both amongst Christians and Muslims, this mosque gained special status. According to Ibn Al-Katheer, many Muslims consider it as noble place. It is also rumored to be the mosque where Prophet Jesus (Eesa) will descend and pray, according to Muslim traditions.

Al-Waleed made a considerable effort and used considerable resources in the construction of the mosque. However, he was unable to finish the mosque before his death. Later, his brother Suleman Ibn Abdul-Malik was able to complete the mosque when he became the caliph in 715 CE (96 AH).

Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim and the conquest of Sindh (Present-Day Pakistan)

In the year 88 AH, the Sri-Lankan king wanted to establish good relations with Hajjaj and Caliph Al-Waleed Ibn Abdul-Malik. To do so, he sent a ship loaded with gifts to both of them. Amongst the people who were on board

were a few Muslim men and women from Sri Lanka, who were there as envoys to meet the Muslim leaders in Iraq.

While the ship was on its way to Basrah, a storm caused it to deviate off track and instead land in the port city of Debal, Sindh (near present-day Karachi, Pakistan). Seeing this, some from the nomadic Hindu tribes of the area, called Bawarij, took over the ship and took its people captives. One of the girls under captivity was able to escape and wrote to Hajjaj about the situation and the mistreatment they had suffered at the hands of the local Hindus. Once Hajjaj came to know about this, he wrote to Raja Dahir, the king of Sindh and a Hindu, requesting him to release the ship and the captive Muslim women. However, the king responded by saying that he had no control over those pirates. This angered Hajjaj and he prepared two armies in an attempt to release the captives, but both failed. The army leaders of both teams were killed and the soldiers were taken captive.

When news of this reached Hajjaj, he prepared a much bigger army and chose his nephew, Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim, to lead it. He charged Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim to release the captives and conquer the area. Earlier, Hajjaj had sent Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim to fight the Kurds in the north of Iraq that resulted in the killing of many Kurds.

As these pirates used to terrorize ships in the Arabian Sea, Hajjaj tasked Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim with removing this threat permanently. Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim first moved towards Makran and used that as a base before pushing forward. On the way to Debal, he successfully conquered other smaller cities that included Qanzabur and Armanil, and then continued until he reached Debal.

Once he reached the outskirts of Debal, Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim placed a siege on the city, which was mostly controlled by Hindus. The Hindus had high regard for the city as it also had a huge temple for a known idol, which had a very long wooden mast at its top with a red flag hanging from its end. Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim ordered catapults to aim towards this mast until it was broken. When the idol, which Hindus regarded as one of their gods, was broken, it broke the resolve of the Hindus. Raja Dahir was killed in the fierce battle that ensued, which subsequently led to their defeat. Ibn Al-Qasim was able to conquer the city.

After his conquest, Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim stayed in the city and was able to socialize with the local Hindus, who were quite taken with his personality. Numerous Hindus converted to Islam and this region eventually became Islamic (present-day Pakistan).

Hajjaj passes away

In 95 AH (714 CE), during the last ten days of Ramadan, Hajjaj caught a severe form of stomach cancer that eventually took his life. Due to his iron fist rule over the Iraqis, Hajjaj's death brought good news for the people of Iraq. Some of them called the day 'the wedding of Iraq'. Umar Ibn Abdul-Aziz, who became caliph from Banu Umayyah after the death of Suleman Ibn Abdul-Malik and who was well-respected by his people, spoke about Hajjaj's death that he envied Hajjaj's love of the Quran and his giving to his family. He also admired Hajjaj's words at his death when he said, 'O Allah, forgive me, for people are claiming that you will not'.

Hajjaj left his legacy as an oppressor as that was the only way he tried to subdue the people of Iraq. One of the hadiths of the Prophet mentioned that from the clan of al-Thaqeef, there will be an oppressor and a liar [\[107\]](#) . Ibn Taymiyyah notes that Hajjaj was the oppressor and Mukhtar was the liar [\[108\]](#) .

Although there is little disagreement on Hajjaj's position in history, there is also a debate amongst historians whether the situation in Iraq could have come under control if Hajjaj would not have adopted the iron fist rule. This is evident by the many leaders who came before him but failed to take control of Iraq.

10.12 The Killing of Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim

When Hajjaj died, Muhammad Ibn Qasim was well into making inroads in the present day Pakistan. However, during this period, Caliph Al-Waleed

Ibn Abdul-Malik passed away in 96 AH, and his brother Sulaiman Ibn Abdul-Malik took over the reign of the caliphate.

Sulaiman, too, despised Hajjaj due to his alleged crimes and bloodletting leadership style. In revenge, he assigned one of Hajjaj's enemies, Salih Ibn Abdurahman, as a governor over Iraq. On becoming governor, Salih relieved all of Hajjaj's men from their positions, including Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim, who at the time was the general of the forces in Sindh and was making inroads in other areas as well.

When the news reached Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim about his being relieved from the position as leader of the Islamic conquest army, some people tried to convince him to rebel on the caliph and take charge of the lands that he had conquered away from the center of the caliphate. This would have been quite easy for Muhammad Ibn Al-Qasim as he enjoyed staunch loyalty of his soldiers and was loved and respected among the general masses of Sindh. However, being a steadfast Muslim, Ibn Al-Qasim did not see it befitting to rebel against the ruling Muslim caliph (Suleman). He also feared that his rebellion would cause a rift among the united Muslims who had experienced numerous wars and rebellions over the preceding years. He therefore conceded his position.

Sulaiman had numerous feuds with Hajjaj and wanted to punish all those who were close to Hajjaj. This prompted him to call back Muhammad Ibn Qasim and, according to certain accounts, he imprisoned him in the same prison where Hajjaj used to imprison his enemies. Later, Muhammad Ibn Qasim died in that prison.

11 Conclusion

Banu Umayyah continued to rule for another thirty three years after the death of Suleman Ibn Abdul-Malik. Later, the Abbasid Caliphate took over and ruled as caliphs for more than five hundred years until 1258 CE. The Abbasids, thus were the third of the Islamic caliphate after the Rashidun and Banu Umayyah caliphate. Subsequently other dynasties and rules

surfaced that have continued until today. The more prominent of those were the Ottomans who ruled over a number of Muslim areas from 1299 CE to the early part of the twentieth century (1923 CE).

– The End

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13 Other Books by IqraSense

Note: These books and others are available at HilalPlaza.com

1. Jesus – The Prophet Who Didn't Die
 2. Jerusalem: A Religious History – The centuries old Christian, Islamic, and Jewish struggle for the “Holy Lands”
 3. The Power of Du'a (Prayers)
 4. 100+ Du'a (Prayers) for Success and Happiness
 5. Inspirations from the Quran - Selected DUAs, Verses, and Surahs from the Quran
 6. Summarized Stories of the Qur'aan
 7. Healing and Shifa from Quran and Sunnah: Spiritual Cures for Physical and Spiritual Conditions based on Islamic Guidelines
-

Jesus - The Prophet Who Didn't Die

This book's goal is simply to provide information from Quran, Hadith, and Scholarly explanations / Quranic interpretations about the story of Jesus and the counter arguments in the Quran about Jesus, and other Christianity fundamentals.

The book will take you back in time and narrate Islamic viewpoints on the day of the crucifixion, the story of disciples of Jesus, Mary, Jesus's disciples and more - all from an Islamic standpoint. You will come to know about the Quranic verses that are specifically addressed to Christians about some of the claims of Christianity, Jesus, and more.

In this information packed book, you will learn the following:

- The story of the birth of Maryam (Mary) to her parents Imran and Hannah
- Maryam's (Mary's) mother promise to God (Allah)
- What Allah said about Maryam about her birth
- The story of the Rabbis, and Zakkariyyah in Bait Al-Maqdis in Jerusalem
- The story of the Jewish Rabbis' lottery about them competing to adopt Maryam
- Maryam's ordeal during and before Jesus's (Eesa's) birth
- The Quranic story about Maryam and the Angel that spoke to Maryam
- The birth of Jesus (Eesa) in Bethlehem as mentioned in the Quran
- Jesus speaking from the cradle in defense of Maryam (Mary)
- Ibn Kathir's depiction on how certain Jewish priests hid the birth of Maryam (Mary)
- Jesus's (Eesa's) teachings and how they parallel in the Quran and the Bible (Injeel)

- Ibn Kathir's story on Jesus's visit to the Jewish temple the night prophets John (pbuh) and Zakariyah (pbuh) died
- The story of Jesus's disciples in the Quran
- Islamic view on how the story of disciples in Christianity contradicts Biblical teachings and Quranic teachings
- Miracles of Jesus (Eesa) as described by Allah
- The story how Jesus (Eesa) was asked to prove his miracles
- How Angel Gabriel (Jibreel) supported Jesus (Eesa) to do miracles that many mistook as Jesus (Eesa's) miracles
- How Allah explicitly mentions that Jesus (being a human being) was granted some powers (through the Angel and others)
- A presentation about the strong affirmation in Quran on how Jesus (Eesa) was not crucified
- The Islamic story about how Jesus (Eesa) was convicted of crimes by certain Jewish priests of the time
- The Islamic story about how Jesus (Eesa) spoke to five of his companions about the crucifixion
- How Christian scripture too supports that Jesus was not God
- Quran's explanation in Quran about the Christian claims of making Jesus (Eesa) as son of God
- How Allah questions Jesus about him being worshipped by people
- The story about Jesus's (Eesa's) second coming in Islam
- The hadith about Jesus breaking the cross in his second coming

- Explanation on New Testament's contradictions about Jesus's (Eesa's) life
- and much more.....

DUAs for Success (book) - 100+ Duas from Quran and Sunnah for success and happiness

- This book packs 100+ powerful DUAs that are effective for people in tough situations of life such as dealing with difficulties, financial issues, family, health issues, making tasks easy, success, and more.
- Includes AUTHENTIC DUAs from the Quran and Hadith (extracted from Saheeh Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja,...)
- Transform the way you make your DUAs by instead making the same DUAs using the same words that were used by the Prophet (S.A.W.S.)
- These DUAs are also recited by the Imams in Haraam mosques in Makkah and Madinah during Taraweeh and Khatam Quran in Ramadan and other situations
- The book includes translation and transliteration of all the DUAs. Easy to memorize.
- The book provides potential uses for each DUA
- These DUAs provide us real solutions for when we need them the most
- The final chapter at the end includes the best of the best Duas as they are from the Quran with an explanation of when various

prophets made those Duas to Allah.

DUAs in this book are suitable for asking Allah for:

- Relief from debts
- Increase in Rizq (provisions)
- Relief from anxiety and calmness in hearts
- Ease of difficulties
- Blessings for self and family
- Asking for righteous children
- Forgiveness of sins
- Staying firm in faith
- Asking for a sound character
- Asking for security for family
- High status in this life and the hereafter
- Refuge from calamities
- High status in Jannah
- Tawakkul (trust) in Allah
- Success in this life and the hereafter
- Health and wealth
- Asking for lawful provisions
- Protection from persecution
- Refuge from laziness and old age

- Relief from poverty
- Protection from Satan and other evils
- and 100+ more Duas

"The Power of Dua" - An Essential Guide to Increase the Effectiveness of Making Du'a to Allah

This bestselling Islamic book's goal is simply to provide information from Quran, Hadith, and Scholarly explanations / Quranic interpretations to increase the chances of Du'as getting accepted.

In this information packed publication, you will learn answers to these commonly asked questions:

- Why should we make Du'a when everything is already decreed?
- What can hold acceptance of Dua? (Important question)
- What can help make Duas accepted? (Important question)
- What should never be asked in a dua?
- A complete checklist that you can keep handy and work on as a reminder
- Can Du'a be made in prayers?
- What mistakes do people make after duas are answered?
- What are the effects of Dhikr on making Dua? (very important)
- What role does Quran play in the acceptance of your Dua?

- What are the stipulations for acceptance of dua?
 - Why making Du'a to Allah is not an option, but a necessity.
 - Understanding the life transformational powers of Dua
 - How Du'a CAN change what is already decreed?
 - The benefits of making dua
 - Allah's sayings with regard to dua
 - What mistakes people make that make Du'as "suspended" rather than accepted?
 - What are the mistakes related to the topic of Du'a that makes Allah angry?
 - What happens when a Du'a appears to be unanswered?
 - What about the wait in getting Du'a accepted?
 - What are the times when Du'a is accepted?
 - Which people's Du'a are especially accepted?
 - What if someone asks Allah something that is sinful?
 - How to Invoke Allah in Dua?
 - What is the best position for Making Dua?
 - What is the best place for making Dua?
 - Du'as that various Prophets made for various situations, and difficulties that they faced
 - and more....
-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

IqraSense.com is an Islamic blog covering religion topics on Islam and other religious topics. To discuss these topics in more detail, you are encouraged to join the discussion and provide your comments by visiting the blog.

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The End

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[1] Narrated by Ibn Abbas in Saheeh Bukhari, 3113

[2] According to Islamic beliefs, Zamzam water is blessed, and possesses many virtues. Pilgrims that go to Makkah, use it for drinking and bring it back with them.

[3] The story is described in detail in the Prophetic Biography by Ibn Ishaq

[4] Al-Tirmidhi Vol. 1, Book 46, Hadith 3619

[5] Hadith narrated by Sahih Muslim _Also, see ‘Noor al-Yaqeen fi Seerat Sayyid al-Mursaleen and also ‘Ar-Raheeq al-Makhtoom’ (islamqa.info).

- [6] According to the Quran, the Prophet's wives are the mothers of the believers (as will be explained in detail later in the book.)
- [7] Mentioned in all the Sahih Hadiths (Bukhari, Muslim)
- [8] Sharia is the code by which Muslims worship Allah in all its forms including rules for praying, prohibition of dealing with interest, fair treatment of women, and so on.
- [9] Hadith in Sunan Ibn Majah (1/7/11) and authenticated by Al-Albani.
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- [12] Ad-Darimi
- [13] *Ash-Shari'ah* of al-Ajuri, p65
- [14] *Ash-Shari'ah* , p55 and Abu-Dawud
- [15] Al-Lu'lu' al-Makeen min Fataawaa Sheikh Ibn Jibreen, p. 30
- [16] Amr Ibn Al-Aas later became a Muslim and led the Muslim armies on various military expeditions.
- [17] Ibn Ishaq, Guillaume page 151 -152.
- [18] One year earlier, twelve Muslims had given their pledge to the Prophet in the event that was called "The First Aqabah Pledge".
- [19] Al-Bukhari 3352 .
- [20] Bukhari 4560 .
- [21] Book - When the Moon Split, page 161.
- [22] 'Pledge of Ridwan' means 'Pledge of Pleasure' referring to Allah's Pleasure.
- [23] Sahih al-Bukhari 3949
- [24] Bukhari(2617) and Muslim (2190)
- [25] Book – When the Moon Split, page 301
- [26] Book – When the Moon Split, page 311
- [27] Sahih Al-Bukhari 4261
- [28] Book – When the Moon Split, page 328
- [29] Book – When the Moon Split ,page 331
- [30] Al-Bukhari, Hadith 1623, 1626, 6361
- [31] Again, this is one of the core principles of Islam, which is to reject all acts of Shirk or anything that leads to it. Shirk is associating others (Idols, people, etc.) in worship with God (Allah).
- [32] Sahih Al-Bukhari 4446
- [33] Sunan Abi Dawud 3120
- [34] The historical reasons behind this will be explained later in the book.
- [35] Islamqa.info # 10055
- [36] Sahih al-Bukhari mentions in hadith 2462 on behalf of Umar.

- [37] Source: “When the Moon Split”, Darussalam Publications.
- [38] Narrated by Bukhari, 683; Muslim 418.
- [39] As mentioned in chapter 6, Ali was from Ahl-e-Bayt.
- [40] Many Shiites believe that Ali should have been the first Caliph. This became one of the primary issues that led to the split of Shiites from Sunnis, as will be explained later.
- [41] Jamiat at-Taramdhi Vol 1 Book 46 Hadith 3662
- [42] Sahih Bukhari 3659
- [43] Reported by Tabari in ‘ *The Conquest of Arabia* ’, on page 16 and 17.
- [44] During his lifetime, the Prophet regarded Zaid Ibn Thaabit as being the most knowledgeable about obligatory religious injunctions in Islam. (Reported by Ahmad (3/281) and Tirmidhi (3790))
- [45] Sahih Bukhari 4986
- [46] Levant refers to the countries east of Mediterranean and includes countries such as Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Jordan, and Syria.
- [47] Yazeed Ibn Abu-Sufyan should not be confused with Yazeed Ibn Muawiyah Ibn Abu-Sufyan, whose forces killed Imam Hussein Ibn Ali. This is covered in later chapters.
- [48] Sahih al-Bukhari 4455, 4456, 4457
- [49] Sahih Bukhari (23 and 82) and Sahih Muslim (2390 and 2391)
- [50] Sahih Bukhari 2679
- [51] Ikramah Ibn Abu-Hisham (earlier known as Ikramah Ibn Abu-Jahal) died in the battle of Yarmouk fighting for Khalid Ibn Al-Waleed’s forces.
- [52] Commanders of the Muslim Army, Darussalam 2001.
- [53] Surah Al-Kahf (18:46) – Quran
- [54] It is referred to as the ‘Boraq Wall’ by the Muslims because according to Muslim beliefs, Prophet Muhammad had ascended to the heavens in a horse-like animal called Boraq. The Quran mentions this incident at the beginning of Surah Al-Israa (Chapter 17).
- [55] Some accounts state that he fled the area and returned to Persia. Others state that his dead body was taken to Kashan and they built a tomb for his heroic deed of killing the Caliph.
- [56] Over 90% of Iran’s population are Shiite Muslims.
- [57] Sahih Bukhari 4987
- [58] Saheeh hadith reported in Ahmad (17438) and Tirmidhi (3842). Reported in Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah by Ibn Katheer.
- [59] Reported by Ahmad (4/101), No. 16486.
- [60] Although some from the Shiite sect doubt the existence of a person by this name (Abdullah Ibn Saba), he is well documented in both the Sunni and some Shiite books as the one who attributed divinity to Caliph Ali during his time.
- [61] Majmoo al-Fataawa (4/518) by Ibn Taymiyyah
- [62] Quran, Surah Al-Ahzaab (33:6)

- [63] Quran, Surah Al-Ahzaab (33:32)
- [64] Saheeh Bukhari 3509
- [65] Narrated by Muslim (2408)
- [66] History of Islam by Akbar Najeebabadi, Darussalam Publications – Page 502
- [67] Prophet's household are not to be given charity.
- [68] Ibn Katheer, al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah
- [69] Al-Fataawa al-Kubra, 1/56
- [70] Hadith narrated from Qays Ibn Abi Hazim and reported by Aisha. Mentioned in Ahmad (24133).
- [71] Tafseer al-Qurtubi (14/181). Abu Bakr Ibn Al-Arabi (a Sunni Maliki scholar) should not be confused with Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi, who is regarded as a Sufi and whose teachings are rejected by Sunni scholars.
- [72] Marwan Ibn Al-Hakam later became a leader in the Banu Umayyah Caliphate. His father was a staunch enemy of the Prophet but later had converted to Islam.
- [73] Al-Rijaal of Abu-Umar Muhammad Ibn Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Kashi – This book is considered authentic by Shiites also.
- [74] Joshua (or Yeshua) is mentioned in the Torah as an assistant of Prophet Moses, who later became the chief of the Israeli tribes. Joshua is the central figure of the Book of Joshua in the Hebrew Bible.
- [75] Ibn Taymiyyah – <http://islamqa.info/ar/109264> (See the Arabic book: Al-Mawsooaa' Al-Muyassarah Fil Adyan wal Madahib wal Ahzab Al-Muaasarah" by Dr. Mane' bin Hammad Al-Juhni)
- [76] Reported by Bukhari in Kitaab-ul-Manaaqib and mentioned in Al-Bidayah wan-Nihayah by Ibn Katheer.
- [77] Reported in Sahih Muslim (276)
- [78] Al-Bidaya wan Nihayah
- [79] This has been a challenge between sects where people have taken Quran verses out of context to arrive at different conclusions. The Shiites and Sunnis, for example, have interpreted many Quran verses quite differently from the other. This is also another reason for the Sunnis to hold 'hadith' and the science of authenticating hadith as an important matter.
- [80] Talbees Iblees (Devil's Deception) – By Abdur-Rahmaan Ibn Aleeb Ibn Jafar al-Jawzee (Ibn al-Jawzee). Published by [Dar as-Sunnah](#)
- [81] Reported by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim (Sahih Muslim, translated by AbdulHamid Siddiqi, Lahore: AH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1976), vol.2, pp.510-1.
- [82] Surah Zukhruf, Verse 58.
- [83] Surah al-Anaam, Verse 57 and Surah Yousuf, Verses 40 and 67
- [84] Surah Maida, Verse 95
- [85] Surah Al-Ahzab (33:6) – Quran

- [86] The problem of misinterpreting the Quran due to one's limited understanding has been a problem for a long time. Even non-Muslims have misinterpreted the Quran to prove their false assertions against Islam and Muslims.
- [87] Fatawa by Shaykh Ibn Uthaimeen.
- [88] Abdullah Ibn Zubair later assumed a leadership role in Makkah when he turned against Banu Umayyah.
- [89] Abdul-Malik Ibn Marwan later became a leader from the Banu Umayyah Caliphate.
- [90] Abdullah Ibn Muljam, who killed Caliph Ali, was from the Khawarij and from Kufah.
- [91] Al-Bidayh Wan Nihayah – Ibn Katheer – Page 164
- [92] Due to their hatred for Yazeed, Shiites do not name anyone with that name. However, many Sunnis in Sunni Islamic countries name their children “Yazeed” and “Muawiyah”.
- [93] Authentic hadith, reported in Al-Tirmidhi, al-Bayhaqi in al-Sunan al-Kubra (4/69), is classed as Hasan by al-Albaani.
- [94] Shiites consider Hussein Ibn Ali as one of their Imams, as will be explained later in the book.
- [95] Bidayah Wa Nihayah – Banu Umayyah – Page 191, 202
- [96] As discussed earlier, Hussein Ibn Numair was the one who had struck Hussein Ibn Ali with an arrow that had injured him and resulted in his eventual killing.
- [97] Ibn Katheer reports in Bidayah Wan Nihayah that he was a notable companion of the Prophet and many ahadith in Sahih Bukhari and Muslim are attributed to him.
- [98] Mukhtar was also the brother of Saffiyyah, the wife of Abdullah Ibn Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, both of whom are highly respected because of their piety in the history of Sunnah. Ibn Katheer reports this in Bidayah Wan Nihayah – Page 238.
- [99] Many in history, therefore, attribute Mukhtar’s zeal to pursue the killers of Hussein to his rising popularity and not necessarily to the cause itself.
- [100] Al-Bidayah Wan Nihayah
- [101] At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ad-Darimi
- [102] (Surah Al-Maidah, 5:3) – Quran
- [103] Narrated by Bukhari, 3216
- [104] "Hiwar Hadi Bayna Sunnah wa Shia" (A calm dialogue between Sunnah and Shia.) By Dr. Abdul Rahman Dimashqiah
- [105] Al-Rijaal of Abu-Umar Muhammad Ibn Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz al-Kashi, p.111.
- [106] Ibn Katheer – Al-Bidaya Wan Nihayah (Banu Umayyah) – Page 311
- [107] Sahih Muslim
- [108] Al-Fataawa al-Kubra, part 5 by Ibn Taymiyyah